

# Consumption for a Greener Future:

A Study of Motives, Hindrances and Responsibility  
for Changing Consumption Patterns

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Frida Ekström

## List of Abbreviations

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| A21   | -Agenda 21   |
| CSD   | -Commission on Sustainable Development                               |
| DSD   | -Division for Sustainable Development                                |
| GAP   | -Global Action Plan for the Earth                                    |
| GH    | -Grønn Hverdag   |
| IPP   | -Integrated Product Policy   |
| Klimp | -Climate Investment Programmes                                       |
| LA21  | -Local Agenda 21   |
| LIP   | -Local Investment Programmes   |
| NOK   | -Norwegian kroner  |
| NMoE  | -Norwegian Ministry of Environment                                   |
| NMoF  | -Norwegian Ministry of Finance                                       |
| NOU   | -Norges Offentlige Utredninger (Official Norwegian Reports)          |
| SCB   | -Statistics Sweden   |
| SEPA  | -Swedish Environmental Protection Agency                             |
| SIKA  | -Swedish Institute for Transport and Communications Analysis         |
| SEK   | -Swedish kronor  |
| SMoE  | -Swedish Ministry of Environment                                     |
| SOE   | -State of the Environment Norway                                     |
| SOU   | -Statens Offentliga Utredningar (Government Official Reports-Sweden) |
| SSB   | -Statistics Norway   |
| SNF   | -Swedish Society for Nature Conservation                             |
| TØI   | -Institute of Transport Economics                                    |
| UN    | -United Nations  |



|       |   |
|-------|---|
| UNCED | -United Nations Conference on Environment and Development |
| WCED  | -World Commission on Environment and Development          |
| WSSD  | -World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10)         |



# 1. Introduction

We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.

-Anais Nin<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction and Background

In 1992, an action plan for sustainable development was developed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. The action plan, Agenda 21 (A21), was one of five documents agreed upon in Rio by the 172 attending member states (UNCED 1992). In the following years, both Norway and Sweden began to work on strategies concerning sustainable development, albeit with different approaches and timetables (Norland, Bjørnæs and Coenen 2003). In A21, local authorities were encouraged to enter into a dialogue with citizens in the local community, local organisations and private enterprises (UNCED 1992). Eventually, local environmental projects emerged in the two countries, and environmentally aware citizens engaged in different kinds of projects and organisations, based on initiative from the local authorities as part of Local Agenda 21 (LA21)<sup>2</sup>. The projects were focusing on education and learning and involved individuals, households, municipalities, business actors, organisations and other groups. The aim of those projects, which mainly focused on households and individuals, is to change household consumption towards more efficient use of energy. Chapter four of A21<sup>3</sup> focuses on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. The chapter stresses the need for governments to develop national policies and strategies to encourage changes in unsustainable consumption patterns. This includes the aim to change individuals' behaviour and make people's lifestyles more environmentally

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/anaisnin107089.html>

<sup>2</sup> Local Agenda 21 refers to the general goal set for local communities by chapter 28 of the action plan for sustainable development adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. Since many of the problems and solutions addressed by A21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and involvement of local authorities are therefore viewed as a determining factor in fulfilling the objectives of the action plan. Local authorities play a vital role in educating, mobilising and responding to the public in order to promote sustainable development (Chapter 28 in A21, UNCED 1992).

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1.

friendly, especially in the developed countries. Household consumption such as purchases, recycling habits, transport habits and heating systems in the residences are examples of phenomena which can be made more environmentally efficient.

In this thesis, two projects have been selected in order to find environmentally friendly or environmentally aware individuals, who will be referred to as the participants. The participants' perceptions are of particular interest in the thesis. The purpose of the comparative approach is to start in two different places and projects with different strategies, and to finally discover similarities in the participants' perceptions. By contrasting and comparing findings from two places and two different projects, a more advantageous perspective of perceptions is possible. Grønn Hverdag (GH) is a national network which offers consumer services in Norway, and was founded in 1991 on an initiative from the Norwegian government. Eksjö Miljöteam in Sweden is a local project administered by the local authorities and was founded in 1993. Both GH and Eksjö Miljöteam are referred to as projects in the thesis. The individuals' participation and experience from the commitment in these two projects might have had an impact on their consumption practices and might also, to a certain extent, have led to a change of their environmental perceptions.

The participants' environmental practices do not always seem to correspond with their environmental attitudes. The sometimes *non-environmentally-friendly* actions can be explained in terms of different social and economic qualities<sup>4</sup>. Holden and Norland (2004) argue that environmentally friendly households and those who are members of environmental organisations often have a higher level of education. This may explain their environmental consciousness. On the other hand, these members use long-distance transport, like air transport, more frequently than other people. This causes a much higher consumption of total energy for those who are members of environmental organisations (Holden and Norland 2004). The sociologist Anna-Lisa Lindén (1994) reminds us that it was more common to emphasise the importance of values and material resources as connected to individual social status

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<sup>4</sup> "Proenvironmental behaviour is partially circumscribed as being a prerogative of privileged groups. This has been examined quantitatively: for example, membership of environmental groups and other forms of pro-environmental behaviour have been (inconclusively) correlated with higher incomes and higher socioeconomic status (...) and more positively with higher education levels" (Eden 1993:1749).

in earlier research. Recent research has proved the inconsistency between values and social status, especially when it comes to belonging to a political party. Other factors associated with social status have become more important for people's action patterns than values. An increased multitude of lifestyles in the contemporary society is the main reason for the inconsistency between values and social status. Lindén highlights the importance of investigating the connections between society/individual and consumption/environment, in order to understand the entirety which decides consumption patterns. Holden (2001) points out that not only individual characteristics explain environmentally friendly consumption, but also one's surroundings, such as physical and social conditions for action in the local area. The participants' perceptions, attitudes and values are relevant, as these, according to Holden and Norland (2004) can have an impact on the practices in certain ways. Even if the travelling patterns of individuals in environmentally friendly households spoil the good impression, they still display other environmentally friendly behaviour in several ways in their everyday lives.

The general aim for individuals, who participate in environmental projects, is to change their consumption patterns. In this process they try to act environmentally friendly, but they also run into different obstacles. These obstacles may be on a personal and on an individual level, e.g. bad economy, poor physical health, no time available or laziness. There are also several societal hindrances, such as lack of systems for recycling and poor access to public transport. Another hindrance is lack of eco-labelled products and goods in shops. The ability to influence the environmental situation in households can then be restricted by poor effort by municipalities, nations or the businesses that are unable to improve the environmental situation. For some individuals, the societal structure itself might be perceived as an obstacle. From this point of view, lack of responsibility by the government, authorities and businesses can be understood as a hindrance for a more environmentally friendly consumption by individuals, in addition to an unclear distribution of environmental matters.

In this thesis, the projects, Eksjö Miljöteam and GH, are presented. The participants have voluntarily registered to these projects through individual interest in changing their consumption patterns. The projects focus on assisting the participants and

informing them about ways in which to be more energy-efficient in their everyday life, and how they can influence matters relating to the environment. The aim is to regard different perspectives which are relevant when considering how individuals want to change their consumption patterns. When individuals and households are trying to act environmentally friendly, it is important to consider their motives for action, their room for environmental action, possible hindrances as well as their perception of responsibility. The room for environmental action is also dependent on the physical structures in the society. These *structures* should provide individuals with the options necessary for an environmentally friendly lifestyle.

## Rationale and Purpose of the Thesis

It is more than 13 years since the Earth Summit in Rio took place.<sup>5</sup> The attending governments committed themselves to follow up A21 (UNCED 1992). One chapter of the A21 document emphasises a necessary change in consumption patterns. In Johannesburg in 2002, the issue of changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production was again included as an important strategy to obtain sustainable development (DSD 2002). Still it seems difficult to change the patterns of people's consumption. What can the reasons for that be? It seems difficult for people to make an environmental effort, and those who actually wish to make an effort run into several individual and societal difficulties.

This is a cultural study, which includes the understanding of people's actions and perceptions as shaped within *a certain culture*. The aim is two-folded; firstly, the projects which have emerged as a result of the assumption that consumption patterns are unsustainable are studied. The projects are a part of international environmental policy strategy. How are these projects organised? What is the purpose of the projects? The projects are in turn influenced by Swedish and Norwegian environmental policy and consumption policy. Therefore, the Swedish and Norwegian environmental policies and the policies on consumption are briefly described. This section serves as a starting point for the understanding of how the

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<sup>5</sup> The background for the Earth Summit in 1992 stretches many years back in time. The Stockholm Conference in 1992 is often viewed as the starting point for the UN's environmental work (Malnes 2000).

participants' perceptions are shaped. Secondly, the participants in the projects, who are regarded as environmentally minded, are in focus. The aim is to learn about their motives for joining the projects and their perceived hindrances to change their consumption patterns. What are the motives for joining the projects? What is important for the participants who actually make an effort towards being eco-friendly? The participants' consumption practices represent their environmental effort, which are presented as the participants' consumption patterns. The hindrances of making an environmental effort are part of the participants' room for action, and will be studied further. The perception of responsibility for consumption issues, as regards to oneself, the municipality, the government and the business sector are also considered. It will not be claimed that individuals should be more responsible in relation to environmental issues, nor will it be claimed that the individual environmental effort for a sustainable development is sufficient.

The purpose of the thesis is to search for explanations why environmentally conscious individuals find it difficult to change their consumption patterns. The emphasis is on understanding why it can be hard to change one's consumption patterns if one is willing to do it in the first place. The reasons are thus concentrated around motives, hindrances and responsibility.

## Presentation of Research Questions

In this thesis three main areas of environmentally friendly action are examined. The three areas are:

- What are the participants' motives for joining the environmental projects? How do the motives influence their consumption patterns? What is important for the participants who want to change their consumption patterns in order to make an environmental effort? Why is it important for them to be part of the projects?
- What determines the participants' environmentally friendly consumption and what might restrict their environmental efforts? How do the participants perceive their room for action to change their consumption patterns?

-How are the participants' perceptions of responsibility for environmental issues which are related to household consumption, in relation to the municipality, the national government and international authorities? How do the participants distribute the level on responsibility for the individual, for the municipality and local politicians and for the government and international authorities, concerning certain environmental issues?

## Outline of the Thesis

The methodology is included in this chapter, and will be discussed right after this section.

The next chapter addresses the theoretical approach applied in the thesis. Central concepts and considerations are discussed, which serve as a basis for the wider context of the thesis. The other sections in the chapter provide a theoretical discussion, which reflects the three main areas of study, namely motives, hindrances and responsibility.

Chapter three describes the projects approach. The chapter is divided up to consider the projects separately and is mainly descriptive. The projects' historical background is detailed and the projects' strategies and function are presented. In relation to each project the national environmental policies are discussed briefly, as well as the project's relationship to the national environmental agenda. The aim is not to evaluate them.

Chapter four contains the empirical information collected from the conducted interviews. This part is divided into two main sections, where information and perceptions of the participants from each project are treated separately. Firstly, the participants' motives for joining the projects are viewed. Secondly, main consumption patterns are described. Thirdly, the participants' perceptions of hindrances for action are discussed, and finally, the participants' perceptions of responsibility are presented in relation to environmental issues and other levels of authority.



Chapter five is a discussion, where the research questions of the thesis are discussed in relation to the participants' perceptions. The findings from the two groups are interpreted and mainly viewed under one. The discussion relates to the theoretical approach presented in chapter two and the empirical information from the interviews.

The final chapter, the conclusion, summarises the findings of the thesis.

## Methodology

This section gives an account of how this study is conducted, and explains reasons for the choices I have made. I have used qualitative methods in the study of the participants in Eksjö Miljöteam and GH, which I found appropriate since the purpose has been to characterise and describe the situation of perceptions among the participants in those projects. The sources of data include interviews conducted with the responsible project managers in each project and with participants in both projects picked out from a stratified random sample. Other sources of data are based on literature and documents.

### Choice of Field and Method

The choice of field is inspired and motivated by a general interest in environmental issues and consumption. I first studied different projects in Sweden, active and non-active, that focused on consumption, change and education in small units like neighbourhoods. When I first heard of GH in Oslo, I started to study its organisation and policy. GH seemed to hold similar projects to those I had been studying in Sweden. These are called *Øko-teams* (Eco-teams). Both Miljöteams and Øko-teams are inspired by the work of *Global Action Plan for the Earth* (GAP)<sup>6</sup>. Øko-teams (presently called Liv & Lyst) later turned out to be aimed mainly at organisations. There were few, if any, active teams of that kind in Oslo (Ulstein 2005). The network GH consists of participants and strives to change consumption patterns and people's lifestyles. The participants are individuals, groups or organisations trying to influence the environmental situation in their household or in the society. I decided

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<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.globalactionplan.com> or <http://www.empowermentinstitute.net/> for further information.

to focus on participants in the network GH, who are living in Oslo. The informants from GH are all living in Bjerke district of Oslo, which is one of 15 districts within the city. Bjerke district has the lowest number of inhabitants in Oslo, if not including the city centre. The total population in Oslo was 521,886 inhabitants in January 2004 and 24,256 of them were living in Bjerke (the Municipality of Oslo 2004). Bjerke is situated in the outskirts of Oslo, in the north middle part, and is connected to both the outer natural areas of the city and have access to public transport, (bus, underground and some parts of Bjerke has also access to the tram) which brings the inhabitants down to the city centre.

The comparative approach in this study led me to the search for a similar operative project in Sweden. Eksjö Miljöteam offered the approach that I was initially looking for, i.e. small groups working together to change their consumption patterns. Eksjö<sup>7</sup>, where Miljöteam is active, is a Swedish medium-sized municipality, and the total number of inhabitants in December 2004 was 16,571 (the Municipality of Eksjö 2005a). The informants from Eksjö Miljöteam related to in the thesis all live in the town centre of the municipality of Eksjö, which has approximately 10,000 inhabitants.

I decided to focus on these two projects and relate to them as two different approaches to changing consumption patterns. However, the projects use different strategies to achieve similar goals. Voluntary participation has been one of the most important criteria when choosing projects. Another criterion has been the projects' aim to change consumption patterns, a thirdly, it has been important that the projects focus on individuals whom they consider to be important actors that who could make changes to the current environmental situation. The fact that the projects are different from each other and are situated in such different geographical locations is considered as a positive challenge for the study.

Sweden and Norway are often considered to be culturally similar to each other, and the political landscape is not very different either (Malnes 2000). The two countries have also received the same input from A21. This gives the two groups a common

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<sup>7</sup> Eksjö is situated in the central southern part of Sweden, in the province of Småland.

ground, while still allowing room for contrasting perspectives and perceptions. I did not want to generalise as such, but to examine the participants as individuals who all have been influenced by environmental information provided by the projects in some way or another. When I decided to study one project in Sweden and one project in Norway, both with a similar approach, I hoped to find differences with regard to perceptions. When I did not find two similar projects, I decided to rather focus on how two different approaches can produce similar perceptions.

### **Interviews and Informants**

This is an interview-based study. The interviews are the most essential data for the study and the sample of informants is strategic. A stratified random sample was done in both projects since the number of team households in Eksjö is relatively low, as are participating households from GH who are living in the area I have chosen to work in. The reason for doing a stratified random sample is also based on my aim to interview people who belonged to different teams in Eksjö in order to cover a wide range of opinions. Another reason is to try to have an equal distribution between the sexes. The aim has also been to conduct interviews with people from different age groups. The purpose of the interviews is to understand the participants' perceptions of certain environmental issues and to get an overview of their experiences from the projects.

I first contacted GH through Kristen Ulstein in January 2004 by e-mail. Afterwards, he invited me to the head office, where we had a detailed discussion about the organisation of the network in relation to my aim. He was available to answer questions and gave me practical advice until he resigned as a general manager in January 2005. Ulstein helped me by engaging people at GH to be at my disposal whenever required. This made the work a lot easier to carry out. In the period between January 2004 and March 2005 I have had informal conversations with Ulstein on the telephone, in his office and by e-mail. Different people at the office helped me find addresses, telephone numbers and information about potential informants. The new general manager, Eirin Fremstad, assumed responsibility for GH in April 2005. I decided to conduct eight interviews with participants for each project. Because I had not found any comparative project in Sweden at that time, I

wanted to make sure the selection of informants would be as varied and representative as possible, taking social status, geographical area, age and sex into consideration. Therefore, I divided the selection of informants from GH into four groups, which I regarded as representative for the participants in GH. The first criterion was based on the informants' social status within the household;

- 1) single individuals under the age of 35
- 2) individuals under the age of 35 with family
- 3) established individuals between 35 and 50
- 4) individuals over 50

The second criterion was gender; each group consists of one female and one male. Concerning the location of the informants' residences, I limited this to geographical area with access to public transport between the area and the city centre, and within close proximity to the outdoors. Thus, all the informants from GH live in Bjerke, which is one of 15 urban districts of Oslo<sup>8</sup> and is located in the north eastern part of Oslo. Lastly, the selected informants were all registered in GH within the last four years. Fifteen participants, who were representative to my predetermined groups, received a letter in which I presented the project and explained why I wanted to meet them in person and conduct interviews in July/August or in November/December 2004. Because most people were unavailable in July/August, I only conducted two interviews during that period. I considered these to be test interviews and have not included them in the thesis. I produced an interview guide, with help from Nina Witoszek<sup>9</sup>, consisting of five main areas of interest. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

I left for Sweden in late August 2004, in order to attend a course in Kalmar<sup>10</sup>, where hoping to find the appropriate project. I was informed about Eksjö Miljöteam by Marianne Lindström<sup>11</sup> after speaking with her about my study aims and interest areas. I decided to use this project in my comparison with GH instead. I contacted the Agenda 21-coordinator, Svensson, in Eksjö by telephone and made an appointment

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<sup>8</sup> Oslo is the capital of Norway and is situated in the south eastern part of Norway.

<sup>9</sup> Nina Witoszek is Research Professor and Research Leader at Centre for Development and the Environment.

<sup>10</sup> Kalmar is a town located at the south eastern coast of Sweden.

<sup>11</sup> Marianne Lindström holds a PhD in Environmental Psychology from the University of Kalmar.

on November 1, 2004. At this meeting, the former project manager, Karl-Gustav Björk was in attendance. Svensson contacted five of the team leaders and informed them that I would be in contact with them. This I did a couple of days later by telephone. The team leaders gave me names, ages, family situations and telephone numbers of the participants in their respective teams, either directly or written down in a list. I then tried to select participants in Eksjö Miljöteam according to the same criteria for the participants in GH, in order to apply to the same selection methods as I had used earlier<sup>12</sup>. I tried to contact a total number of 12 participants by telephone, but only eight of them were available at the time. All of these informants live in the town centre of Eksjö, and belong to four different teams. A new structured interview guide<sup>13</sup> was developed, with help from my tutor Harold Wilhite<sup>14</sup>, in order to make the comparison between the two groups of informants easier. Between November 10 and 13, 2004, I conducted eight interviews with the informants in Eksjö, some with other family members present. The interviews were not recorded, as I felt that the informants were uncomfortable with it, and I did not consider it to be necessary. Instead I took detailed notes during the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately two hours and took place in the participants' homes.

I continued to conduct interviews in Oslo with the GH participants in November 2005. It was difficult to get in touch with these participants for different reasons. One reason was that the register I had received from GH was not updated; many participants had moved, and the addresses and telephone number were not correct. Other reasons were refusal to give interviews or lack of time. Twenty-five letters were sent out in total and 20 people were contacted by telephone. Unfortunately, only seven interviews were conducted because only seven people out of the 25 who had been approached were willing or available to give an interview before the upcoming Christmas holiday. I did not continue the interview section after Christmas. The interviews were conducted between November 29 and December 16, 2004, and lasted between one and three hours and were carried out in the participants' homes.

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<sup>12</sup> Detailed information about the sample of informants from Eksjö Miljöteam and GH is included in Appendix 2.

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix 3.

<sup>14</sup> Harold Wilhite is Research Fellow at Centre for Development and the Environment.

On January 3, I conducted an interview with the municipal Agenda 21-coordinator, currently responsible for the future of Eksjö Miljöteam, Sven-Åke Svensson. The interview was recorded and lasted for approximately three hours. I have also been in contact with him afterwards by e-mail. On March 16, 2005 I conducted an interview with Kristen Ulstein, former general manager in GH. The interview was recorded and lasted for one hour. On August 3, I visited GH to conduct an informal interview with the present general manager, Eirin Fremstad. These interviews were conducted at their respective working place during their working hours. Svensson, Ulstein and Fremstad acted as representatives for Eksjö Miljöteam and GH respectively.

The recorded interviews were transcribed, while the other interviews were organised one by one, and written down. During the interviews the informants were asked to undertake a task. The purpose was to find out priorities of responsibility in relation to certain issues concerning household consumption. The Q-sort method (Waters *et al.* 1985, Block 1961) is used for sorting 12 statements as to individual responsibility, the responsibility of the municipality and local politicians and the responsibility of government and international authorities. This method is mainly used in psychological research and has shown high reliability. The method's area of use is described as follows:

A Q-set can be used to describe either an abstract construct or an individual subject. In either case, judges or observers assign scores to each item in the Q-set by sorting the items (on cards) into piles that range from most characteristic to least characteristic of a particular subject. (...) The primary advantages of the Q-sort method are as follows: (a) observers can be kept naive of the constructs that will be scored from the data they provide; (b) observers are not required to have detailed knowledge of norms for each item; (c) response biases are reduced by sorting items into a fixed distribution. (Waters *et al.* 1985: 509)

In order to employ this method, the 12 statements (items) were written down on cards, one for each statement. Four responding alternatives were given; (0) almost no responsibility, (1) a certain responsibility, (2) great responsibility, and (3) full responsibility.

The informants were asked to sort the 12 statements, which were relevant to household consumption and related to the areas of sustainable development and A21. The sorting statements, which aimed to find the allocation of responsibility, were to a

certain extent outlined with recommendations and help from earlier work made by Marianne Lindström (2003).

*Table 1. The 12 statements of sustainable development issues in relation to household consumption.*

- 
1. Reduce consumption and discharges of toxic chemicals
  2. Be economical with natural resources
  3. Make environmentally friendly products available in the shops
  4. Spend money to improve the environment
  5. Access to clean air
  6. Distribution of information and educational material
  7. Environmentally friendly consumption of goods and services
  8. Reduce waste and increase recycling
  9. Protect and economise fresh water
  10. Use energy efficiently
  11. Reduce traffic pollution and make it more environmentally friendly
  12. Engage different groups in the society
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## **Literature Study**

I have adopted an interdisciplinary approach for different reasons. Firstly, because I believe that focusing on only one discipline would restrict the interpretation and discussion on the subject. Secondly, my background is diverse within disciplines such as social anthropology, human geography, political science and social psychology. Therefore, it felt most natural to regard the issues and this thesis from different perspectives, as far as possible. I limit, however, the understanding of the issues regarded in the different sections within certain boundaries, which are explained more in the chapter Theoretical Approach. The read literature consisted of both primary and secondary written sources. The sources in general aimed to study the projects as well as the areas concerning people's environmental consciousness,

environmental actions and choices with regard to lifestyle. These areas were crucial as background knowledge during the writing process. The basis for the discussion lies within different social sciences, such as social psychology and sociology, which explains the background theories used to analyse perceptions and attitudes towards environmental issues. The work of Marianne Lindström has been a major inspiration for the thesis and the social psychological direction, as has the work of Angelöw and Jonsson. The literary sources create the theoretical basis and enable the mapping of prior research in the area. The sources are written mainly in the 1990s or later. The written literature, books and periodicals, were mainly borrowed from the library at the University of Oslo. Some sources had to be reserved from libraries other places in Norway or Scandinavia. The Internet has been the main statistical source, as well a source for obtaining information about organisations, national policies and regulations, other institutions and activities. Periodicals and other written literature were also found on the Internet. Informative brochures and documents from the national authorities were studied as well. However, I made a selection of sources based on the relevance for the issue of interest. The aim of the literature does hence follow the research questions on; 1) motives, participation, action and the fellowship, 2) the perception of hindrances and efforts in social space, and 3) responsibility in relation to knowledge, authority and information.

The part called References refers to books, periodicals, separate chapters, newspaper articles and other written sources, including Internet sources. There is also a section under References which refers to the informants in question.

## **Analysis**

The data material was accumulated over a six-month period, between August 2004 and March 2005. Recorded interviews were transcribed and written interview notes were fed into the computer. Together with notes and other literature sources, the interview material was categorised into themes based on the underlying questions and theories that I would use. I translated the quotations from the interviews into English. The analysis of the interviews was put together and interpreted before the structure of the thesis was ready. Continuous reflections were made on the data material. A broad compilation of headlines which represented themes, such as



motives, hindrances and responsibility, was prepared after that all the material had been gathered. Useful quotations were taken out and applied to the thesis. The informants in the thesis are referred to as Informant A-O. The participants are all kept anonymous. Managers and other persons in authority are referred to with names.

### **Methodological Considerations**

The selection sequences of informants in both Eksjö Miljöteam and GH have been affected in various ways. Those who volunteered for an interview are perhaps those who were most environmentally aware and wanted to express their commitment and views explicitly. Those participants who are not very committed to the project were perhaps those who refused to give an interview. Another consideration in Eksjö is that both the Agenda 21-coordinator and the team leaders knew beforehand about those participants that were well-spoken and would potentially like to take part in an interview. Therefore, I did not always get all the information I sought. The selection of informants was sometimes already made when I got the list of participants.

Another ethical consideration when conducting the interviews, especially in Eksjö, concerns my own background. My birth place is the nearby town, Nässjö, where my family lives. These towns are small and people tend to know about most other people in the towns. Some of the informants knew some members of my family. In fact, one informant in Oslo also knew my Norwegian family. These circumstances affected the conversation, especially when referring to geographical areas, people in authority, politicians and historical events. It might also have affected the conversation in a way where the informants searched confirmation on opinions about either certain persons or particular events. In certain matters, some informants wanted confirmation. Another consideration is the role I had in relation to the subject discussed. The informants assumed that I was as much committed to the topics as they were, and did not expect me to be objective. They wanted to discuss and get an insight in my views of the subject as well. I tried as far as I could to retain integrity.

Thagaard (2003) discusses the problem between interpretation of data and the informants' self-realisation. The interviewees were informed that the material from the interviews was going to be used in my thesis and gave their consent to this. The

informants were informed about their right to remain anonymous. I have tried to uphold the integrity of the informants and accordingly interpreted it in a truthful way. Qualitative method is based on interpretation, which means the researcher's interpretation of the phenomena studied. Hellevik (2002) argues that high reliability is possible to measure by doing empirical tests. Independent measuring of the same phenomena should then give similar results in order to achieve high reliability. It is difficult to determine the value of perceptions. The condition of reliability in this kind of research is therefore challenging. The interpretations which must be subjective, would not have been the same if another researcher attempted to replicate the same study. This work and analysis is justified by me and cannot be the responsibility of anyone else.

Because this thesis includes participants *belonging* to projects, it can be understood as a case-study, except that my intension was not to study the projects in the first place. However, one of the parts in this thesis considers the projects and their organisation in relation to national policy. The aim in that part is firstly, to describe the projects from where I have selected the informants and secondly, to relate the participants' perceptions to the aims and motives of the national policy. I want to point out that my aim is not to make generalisations between the projects or make comparisons with other similar activities. It is not the projects as such that are the subjects for observation, but the informants from those projects. The projects were chosen in order to find what I define as environmentally aware people. Hence, the individuals in those projects are my objects for this study. However, Hermanson and Joas (1999) point out that the Nordic countries are often seen as similar enough for studies within a similar system design. But differences become evident when studying them in more detail.

When referring to participants in both Eksjö and GH, I mean those informants with whom I conducted interviews. Thus, when I refer to the informants, I include all the informants either in one of the projects or in both projects. The participants in Eksjö Miljöteam are considered as part of an *ongoing* project, even if some of the informants regarded the activity as ended. The participants in both projects are not representative of all other participants in those projects, but their views might point to some tendencies that are similar to other people committed to the environment.

The findings in this thesis might be interesting for future research because of the aim to point to essential perceptions, which can be decisive for effort among environmentally friendly individuals who want to change their consumption patterns.

## 2. Theoretical Approach

The theoretical approach presented in this chapter aims towards the understanding of the arguments in the thesis and to the participants' perceptions. The presentation of views and theories in this chapter makes the total presentation easier to understand. Firstly, definitions and considerations of essential terms and concepts are discussed. This part is divided into three sub-sections, dealing with:

- 1) motives, action, participation and fellowship
- 2) the perception of hindrances and environmental effort in social space
- 3) responsibility, knowledge, authority and information

The purpose of the theoretical approach is to show different possible understandings of the fields. Some social psychological perspectives are taken into account because the focus is on individual perception. Because some perceptions and beliefs are shaped in the culture in which the individuals live, some anthropological perspectives will be looked at. The individuals' relation to the society is explained by the concept of social space, which is used in several disciplines, e.g. human geography and sociology. The perception of responsibility is interpreted as to whom should be responsible for certain environmental issues. Responsibility is also viewed from how it is shared between different actors in the society.

### Concepts and Considerations

The term *environment* can be referred to in different ways, depending on which discipline and area one attempts to study. A definition which includes the complexity of the term can be one where environment refers to:

(...) both the physical space in which we live – the air, water, land, other forms of life, in short, the living and non-living elements of which the planet earth is composed and from which human life evolved – and the social space in which we live, the economic, political and cultural institutions which shape our relations to our fellow human beings. (Muhlenberg College 2005)<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [online]; See the References.

The operational definition of environment in this thesis is one where environment is understood in the broadest sense: as part of the “natural world that is deemed valuable or important by human beings, for any reason” (Wikipedia 2005)<sup>16</sup>. The term environment defines the surroundings, understood as the environment in which individuals live and are part of. It is used in relation to what is considered to be *environmentally conscious*. Consciousness is defined as “the ability to perceive the relationship between oneself and one’s environment” (Wikipedia 2005)<sup>17</sup>. A person who is environmentally conscious is understood as someone who shows a particular interest in the environment. The participants in the projects have on their own initiative found a social environment where like-minded people get together, and share the interest in social and natural environmental issues. The participants are defined as environmentally conscious people because of their participation in the projects. The participants in the two projects in focus are viewed as *environmentally-friendly*, *pro-environment* or *eco-friendly*. These concepts are used in the same synonymous understanding and are understood as the environmental perception which can arise from being environmentally conscious.

*Sustainable development* is currently a well-used concept, which was popularised by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED 1987) in the Brundtland-report *Our Common Future*. The concept was widely defined by WCED as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987: 43). At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (DSD 2002) the focus was on implementation process of sustainable development policies on a global, regional, national and local level. Sustainable development would be a superior objective for the UN. However, there have been numerous interpretations of this definition and the concept has been debated throughout the last decades, mainly in respect to the claimed difficulties to combine developmental and environmental issues. The concept has been developed as a result of a synthesis between environmental conservation thinking and of growth/developmental discourse (Bäckstrand *et al.* 2004). This synthesis has grown out of insight and fear for the non-industrialised countries’ development towards industrialised countries. The

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<sup>16</sup> [online]; See the References, search for *environment*.

<sup>17</sup> [online]; See the References, search for *consciousness*.

strains on the environment from this industrialisation are devastating. Alternative developmental strategies are required. Even if the concept has caused vivid debate, it is still used in many national policies of today. Sustainable development includes three different dimensions (WCED 1987):

- 1) an environmental component (to protect natural resources)
- 2) an economic component (eco-efficiency and sustainable consumption)
- 3) a social component (equity)

Lafferty (2002) argues that the components can be understood as prioritised; the issues are given prominence in the order listed. The fundamental dimension of sustainable development is the environmental component because of its necessary presence compared to the other components that exist independently of the environmental component. This is a rough and basic subdivision of crucial issues included in the concept of sustainable development, which in turn begs for implications. For example, the environmental or ecological component is, according to Lafferty, a necessary prioritised dimension of sustainable development, but can therefore not qualify as an independent standard for implementation.

Lafferty and Meadowcroft claim that, “the idiom of sustainable development increasingly” has influenced international debates about environment and development policy-making (2000: 1). The concept of sustainable development has had great normative impact on agreements, documents and policies on intergovernmental agreements and conventions, as well as on national legislations and municipal regulations (Bäckstrand *et al.* 2004). National policies in Sweden and Norway have incorporated the concept in several documents, processes and guidelines. Non-governmental organisations, private enterprises, and other groups in the civil society have embraced the concept and its ideas and put it into practice. The increasing acceptance of sustainable development as a world strategy has been a controversial political process, which involves different global actors. Bäckstrand *et al.* (2004) argue that sustainable development is a world strategy because of the global focus and recognised official impact it has had. Sustainable development has had great impact on national and municipal policies and the concept is viewed as part of the present international policy of sustainable development. The policy was developed mainly after the UN Conference held in Rio in 1992, and is still evolving.

The present environmental agenda, fronted with the concept of sustainable development, can be understood as a discourse. People have integrated the world strategy and incorporated it into their minds as an accepted strategy. Discourse is understood as:

A specific series of representations, practices and performances through which meanings are produced, connected into networks and legitimized. Different fields and disciplines have worked with different, usually more detailed definitions of 'discourse' (...). There are also matters of more than academic interest. Discourses shape the contours of the taken-for-granted world: they 'naturalize' and often implicitly universalize a particular view of the world and position subjects differentially within it. (Johnston *et al.* 2000: 180)

UN's environmental policy is not implemented all around the world. But the environmental policy still exists, although on different level of achievements, at least among those countries who attended UN conferences on sustainable development. The sociologist Bente Halkier (1997)<sup>18</sup> argues that, "the ways in which the environmental problematique have been understood and dealt with have undergone a slow process of institutionalisation and normalisation", particularly pointing out the historical development of environmental concern in general. This historical development later influenced the UN environmental policy. Halkier continues to argue that "a pro-environmental normative position is accepted, at least discursively, by most politicians, administrators, experts and citizens" (1997). According to Johnston *et al.*'s (2000: 180) definition of discourse, one can argue that the environmental policy on sustainable development has produced legitimised meaning. The legitimisation of facts, figures and data connected to the UN policy can however be questioned, as it is and has been. The UN policy on environment is interpreted as a discourse in this thesis. The projects studied in the thesis, are part of local, national and international environmental policy, which includes all three dimensions; the environmental, the economical, and the social. The participants are trying to change their consumption patterns on recommendations of the policy on sustainable development. The sustainable development discourse offers a reality, which is maintained by one's world view. One's world view is often taken for granted. This thesis is also based on the very same sustainable development discourse, and some understandings are not questioned, because they are understood as self-explanatory.

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<sup>18</sup> Halkier (1997) [online]; See the References.

The interpretation and discussion held in the thesis are based on the present discourse, which can be viewed as the current *global* environmental discourse.

The participants are part of what is referred to as a *fellowship*, which more or less is synonymous to the Swedish word *gemenskap*. The term *gemenskap* is “difficult, if not impossible, to translate adequately into English, since its lexical meaning, ‘sense of community or togetherness,’ lacks the exceedingly strong positive ramifications of the Swedish word”, as the ethnologist Åke Daun explains (1996: 108). The term fellowship is in this sense more or less synonymous to the term *community*, which is understood as:

A social network of interacting individuals, usually concentrated into a defined territory. The term is widely used in a wide range of both academic and vernacular contexts generating a large number of separate (...) definitions. As a consequence ‘What community means has been disputed for even longer than the effects of place’: in the UK, for example, ethnic groups are often referred to as communities, irrespective of whether they occupy separately identifiable territories. (...) Tönnies’s original concept of *gemeinschaft* identified communities as particular types of social networks (i.e. community as a form of human association), and was not concerned with community as either a local social system or a finite, bounded physical location (i.e. a territorially-defined social whole). (...) Further, developments in time-space compression have increased the potential for close interaction among people separated by substantial distances, creating what some term ‘community without propinquity’ and the rapid expansion of the Internet and the World Wide Web has enhanced this with creation of ‘virtual communities’ of people able to interact constantly, and in ‘real time’, by electronic media which can transmit a wide variety of texts. (Johnston *et al.* 2000: 102)

According to the wide use of the term community, the concept is approached from different angles. The local community, in which the participants operate, is referred to as a fellowship. Secondly, the term community is used in the sense of the wider fellowship of environmentally conscious individuals globally. These communities are influenced by the present environmental discourse on sustainable development discussed above. The UN strategy on sustainable development has created communities all over the world, which embrace the strategic view of the environment and accept the way of thinking. The *environmental community* can be viewed in relation to what Johnston *et al.* (2000: 102) call “virtual communities”, a worldwide movement, or even an environmental movement. The environmental movement is working towards environmentally friendly societies on a global level. *Global Action*



*Plan for the Earth* (GAP)<sup>19</sup> is only one example, of how a global organisation is working in unison with the guidelines set by the UN. These kinds of organisations support the view of the environment and sustainable development that the UN holds. There are of course different understandings of that community and its existence, as well as different movements. If, including all environmentally aware people, their different views and strategies to handle environmental problems, they all will be referred as the environmental community. The environmental community can also be understood as a cultural community. The community is then producing shared views of and attitudes towards environmental issues, and consists of people who have a sense of “belonging” in relation to this community and who are all occupied with environmental issues in one way or another. This might be a simple understanding of such a broad community and of course there are opposite views within such a community as within other communities.

What, then, are environmentally conscious people trying to do? The participants in Eksjö Miljöteam and GH are trying to change their consumption patterns. It is vital to look at the term *consumption*, which has a central part in the thesis and is understood in relation to environment. Consumption is a wide concept used in a lot of situations. In the broadest sense environmental consumption is the using up of a resource (Wikipedia 2005). Further, consumption is:

(...) the selection, adoption, use, disposal and recycling of goods and services. [and] Studies of consumption investigate how and why society and individuals consume goods and services, and how this affects society and human relationships. (...) Consumption studies are difficult because they involve investigating everyday life situations (...). (Wikipedia 2005)<sup>20</sup>

In regard to the purpose of this study, consumption will be considered as the activity individuals try to change and limit. It is their consumption of goods and services, for instance of products, energy, and waste. Environmentally friendly consumption can be understood as represented “by consumer practices which have the intention of improving the environment - regardless of whether they actually do it or not” (Eden 1993: 1744). Halkier (1997) points out that all behaviour is not, however, acceptable as “green”, but different behaviours offer conflicts which are based on lack of expert

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<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.globalactionplan.com> or <http://www.empowermentinstitute.net/> for further information.

<sup>20</sup> [online]; See the References, search for *consumption*.

knowledge to settle which consumer practices that is sustainable. Furthermore, regardless of expert consensus, there are different societal ideas of how to handle environmental problems and solutions. Consumption patterns are part of everyday practices and draw upon larger dynamics in contemporary societies (Gullestad 1989). Practices are not always easy to change, which are discussed in a later section.

Chapter four in A21 (UNCED 1992) generally focuses on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and the conception that changing the consumption patterns are necessary for a sustainable development. The issue of changing consumption patterns is very broad and is addressed in several parts of A21, where consumption is typically understood through studies of energy, transport, and waste. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, agreements were reached on several measures (DSD 2002); governments were encouraged to draw up programmes to promote increased awareness in areas such as education, public information, media, and consumer information. The importance of promoting public procurement that develops and distributes environmentally sound goods and services was also given weight. Consumption was regarded as unsustainable, particularly on a global level (UNCED 1992), from the very beginning, when the Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) of the UN presented A21 chapter four. Consumption is either connected to poverty, which has grave influence on environmental resources, or the unsustainable patterns of consumption of goods and services in industrialised countries. Both patterns are defined as unsustainable. This approach assumes *limits to growth* on a global level. Hille (1995) argues there is a problem concerning the approach in A21. It seems the main problem to achieving sustainable development expressed in A21 is limited resources, not economic growth. The dilemma expressed in A21 is on the other hand mainly the resource distribution problem. If so, it is hard to say if there, in addition, are limits to growth, especially when economic growth often is based on resource usage. The present resource use in the richly developed countries is high, most often higher than that of the poorer countries, which can be measured by the ecological footprint:

Ecological footprint is the land and water area that is required to support indefinitely the material standard of living of a given human population, using prevailing technology. (Ecological Footprints of Nations 2005)<sup>21</sup>

The ecological footprint measures the cultivated land or the area which is needed for each individual to uphold the existing consumption and lifestyle. The ecological footprint includes the resource use of consumption and generated waste (Gregow 2000). In Sweden, the ecological footprint per person is high. In fact, the Swedes' ecological footprint is the sixth highest in the world. The on average footprint for the world population was 2.5 hectare per person in the year 2000, while the Swedes' footprint was 7.2 hectare (Gregow 2000: 17).

Consumption is, however, related to as an *environmental problem*, when it leads to resource depletion on a global level over time. Hille (1995) argues that upholding today's consumption patterns at the level of the developed countries, and transferring it to all people in the world, would not necessarily be catastrophic. But it is not known whether that level is environmentally sustainable and whether such rates of consumption could be kept up for generations to come. As Hille argues, there is simply no question of whether there are limits to consumption per person at the global level, and "it is patently impossible to provide everyone on Earth with a solid-gold Cadillac" (Hille 1995: 10). The planet could not provide all the necessary energy for such a mission. Instead, he asks the relevant question whether people in the richer countries already have overshot the limits, or if they are getting close. Consumption has to be considered as an environmental problem and needs to be regarded with care. The thesis is based on the interpretation that the participants' environmental action is good and meaningful, and that the participants' environmental effort contributes to a better environment.

## Motives, Action, Participation and Fellowship

The commitment in Miljöteam and Grønn Hverdag is motivated by the different participants. There is no agreed definition on motivation, but usually it is defined as why a given behaviour occurs (Moisander 1997)<sup>22</sup>. Motives include different

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<sup>21</sup> [online]; See the References.

<sup>22</sup> Moisander (1997) [online]; See the References.

conscious and unconscious needs, as well as desires and expectations that give rise to specific actions in direction towards a goal (Angelöw and Jonsson 1994). Moreover, according to Moisander (1997), who refers to a study of motivators for ecologically responsible consumption, pro-environmental attitudes attempt to motivate consumer behaviour. People who are trying to make an effort towards the greater good of the environment seem to be willing to clean up their acts as consumers, even if an attitude-behaviour relationship not necessarily is found within all ecologically relevant behaviours. Moisander argues that the majority of *green consumers* seem to choose only to do what they consider to be their fair share of the things they know and understand is good for the environment. This fair share is every individual's own opinion of what they consider as an acceptable amount of inconvenience and enough effort to be ecologically responsible. Moisander argues for a complex and multidimensional nature of ecologically responsible behaviour where personal ideas of appropriate ways of being environmentally concerned may vary considerably. The correct behavioural elements involved, and the behaviour which is most important regarding to individuals' patterns of ecologically responsible consumption, also varies. Lindén (1994: 18) argues that consumers who carry out environmentally friendly consumption practice are not only motivated by environmental knowledge and values alone, but practice could also be taken for granted. Some green consumers do not necessarily ascribe much expressive purpose to their practices. Halkier (1997) claims that green consumers:

(...) see practices not as choices but as natural habits, something just done as part of the daily routine, and as something they have never taken an active choice about at all. Some EFCP's [environmentally friendly consumption practice], such as sorting waste, are carried out with little deliberate intention being mediated via institutionalised practical systems, and are valued by consumers as useful in improving the environment exactly because of the lack of intentionality on their part. (Halkier 1997)

The two environmental projects, which will be discussed in this thesis, can be regarded as social fellowships with participants who are devoted to environmentally friendly behaviour. The participation can then be understood as motivated by actually belonging to a fellowship. Åke Daun (1996) argues that the fellowship is very important in the Swedish society. The ability to cooperate is highly valued in Sweden and Swedes often try to enter formal groups where they interact with others. This argument is based on the much sought-after feeling of sameness. To associate

and understand something in the same way as others gives an acceptance of behaviour and one's perceptions. When people are committed to a collective group they adapt to the views and values of the group. Collective groups are therefore often well-integrated and homogenous in Sweden, as well as in Norway. The mutual confirmation between people makes the fellowship important. The groups are to a wide extent based on group-membership. Daun (1996) argues that regarding power and influence, the collective group is always superior to the individual in all of the Nordic countries. This argument can be used to point out the importance of the fellowship with regards to changing consumption patterns, even if the fellowship is not always superior to the individual in all situations, which will be argued later in the thesis. According to Gullestad (1989), the Nordic countries are undergoing extensive cultural and social changes. This is because the idea of equality is defined as sameness and individualism is defined as independence. The *feeling of equality* that people strive for is most associated with the Swedish word *gemenskap* (fellowship) (Daun 1996: 108). Considering Daun's argument, most people strive to find groups that comply with their area of interests.

The fellowships in the two projects, presented in this thesis, may at first glance look very different from each other. The physical presence of the fellowship is believed to be essential to achieve results within the organisation of Eksjö Miljöteam. Shape and physical presence differentiate the two fellowships from each other. This leads to the assumption presented in the book *Imagined Communities*, where the sociologist Benedict Anderson (1991) presents a view on nationality as the personal and cultural feeling and belief of belonging to a nation. He argues that modern communities are based on imagined and mythical concepts of an ancient and fixed history shared by members of a community. Imagined communities are vital in order to gather a lot of people and mediate a cultural sense of belonging. In the world today, it is possible to do that with the help of modern technology and the media, which reach out to many people at the same time. Communication makes the accumulation of cultural traditions, practices and conducts possible. Anderson focuses on myths, memories, values and symbols (mainly through media) as the core units in such imagined communities. Anderson's concept of imagined communities is used primarily about nations, but the idea can be transferred to different environmental communities. The environmental movement with environmentally conscious people, who are trying to

influence the environmental situation, can be perceived as an imagined community. Communities do not necessarily have to be physical gatherings to encourage people to act in common (Halkier 1997). Halkier argues that environmentally friendly consumers could feel they belong to an imagined community which is “linked to other unknown consumers, whose consumption behaviour is as environmentally benign as their own” (1997). The participation is, however, voluntarily and not binding. Moreover, the participants in different environmental projects in different geographical locations might feel they are part of this community, which might stimulate a joint environmental action. Participants of environmental projects and other people committed to the environment can feel they are part of a movement. This fellowship triggers action, as well as the perception of a certain responsibility for the environment. As long as people know about others who are also trying to make an environmental effort, they might be willing to do it themselves. Anderson (1991) argues that communities are maintained by the imaginary. The belief in the imagined community makes the community real. It will be argued that it is when the imagined community becomes real for the participants, and they know there are others out there with similar perceptions as themselves, that they want to participate and make an effort towards the greater good of the environment. The fellowship does not necessarily need to be physically present. An imagined community can be as much present as a physical one; people’s belief in a fellowship might create a greater fellowship than a physical one.

In *The Tragedy of the Commons*, Hardin (1968) argues how a limited natural resource will be destroyed because people are driven by their self-interest and will consume enormous quantities of it if they have free access to it. According to this argument, individuals are driven to maximise the personal gain. Most people have problems estimating the consequences of their actions, because the amounts of resources are large in relation to individual consumption. If resources are being over-exploited it will turn out to be a problem (Johansson & Lindström 2004).

Consumption can be seen as destroying the resources, over-consuming them or creating limited space and polluted environmental surroundings. High consumption of energy, waste, resources (implicitly through purchase), and road traffic which leads to effluents of CO<sub>2</sub>, and air pollution have an impact on the environment. Some of these areas of consumption could be argued to be problems of common resources.

Air and climate are issues still considered and used as a common resource, thus consistent according to the principle of the *commons* (Malnes 2000). Consumption practices depend on individual action, not only on the local level, but also on the global level. At the same time, individual local actions might influence other people's conditions in locations elsewhere. This is a social dilemma where people can act for the best of the fellowship or of individual interest. Hardin claims that people are only interested in personal gain, and the only thing that could stop them is governmental regulation, laws and incentives (including privatisation). According to Hardin (1968) then, no common resource could be protected by the free will and interest of the groups, without the coercive power of the government, that force the individuals to do what is good for the groups. What Hardin does not consider is the special mutual responsibility that can be developed within a group with a common interest in a common resource. An example of a common interest in a common resource which the participants care for in the Swedish project, is presented in the section where the participants' motives are considered.

## Perceived Hindrances and Efforts in Social Space

How do individuals perceive their possibilities to change their consumption patterns? What people think and believe they can and cannot do, i.e. their perception of hindrances is studied. The participants' perceptions of hindrances that limit them from exerting a satisfying environmentally friendly effort are discussed. Many people today have knowledge about several environmental problems, and many of them know how these problems are created by human behaviour. Still, changes in consumption patterns, action habits and lifestyles are moving slow. How could that be explained? One way to understand this is to focus on possible hindrances for action that exist in the society as well as among individuals. The participants show an interest in acting environmentally friendly together with others by taking part in the projects. Seemingly, the households, which the participants are part of, have the intention to act as environmentally friendly units. Each household's environmental effort depends on both societal and individual conditions as well as on possible hindrances. The societal conditions vary from place to place, and constitute the possibilities for people on the local level to act environmentally friendly, e.g. how the local authorities prioritise access to recycling systems and public transport

systems. The local private enterprises do also play a significant role when it comes to the support of local production and the supply of local goods in grocery stores. The individual conditions depend on the individuals' willingness and ability for eco-friendly action, as well as achieving individual knowledge about eco-friendly alternatives. Angelöw and Jonsson (1994), who work with social psychological action theory, claim that there are several hindrances and conditions for environmentally friendly way of living. These hindrances and conditions can be on an individual, societal as well as an environmental level and are a part of individuals' *room for action*. The room for action defines the ability people have to be environmentally friendly or to take environmental action. There is an exchange between individual, societal and environmental factors and conditions. Angelöw and Jonsson (1994) point out that the exchange between the different factors constitutes a complex entirety and in this process the individual's *motive* forms a driving force for her actions. The motives can be different conscious and unconscious needs, desires, and expectations that lead to specific actions towards a goal, which in the case of the projects, give the impression to be a more environmentally friendly consumption-behaviour. Hindrances might restrict the individual's striving towards this goal and certain conditions might help the individual to achieve the goal. People's objectives are rarely absolute, but rather multidimensional. The individual's interpretations of the reality, in this case preventive circumstances regarding to environmental adapted acting, will also underlie future behaviour. If the hindrances are perceived as extensive and not likely to influence, the outcome might be passivity and frustration. Individual and societal hindrances interact, are difficult to separate from each other and do frequently appear simultaneously.

Holden (2001) distinguishes between *individual* factors, and influences from the *surroundings*. Examples of individual factors or qualities that affect actions can be perceptions, motivations, attitudes, personalities and lifestyles. The surroundings are circumstances determined by culture, group belonging, family and what he calls "situation defined determinants" (2001: 33). These determinants, which impact consumption behaviour, are e.g. physical surroundings and social surroundings. The interplay between individual factors and influences from the surroundings shapes the consumption pattern. Halkier (1997) argues that the processes which *open* the room for action for those who want to change their patterns and concede the conditions for



environmentally friendly consumption are, however, bound up with and dependent upon larger institutional systems, such as e.g. expert knowledge and market logics.

The participants' perceptions of hindrances and environmental effort can be interpreted as produced in *social space*. Johnston *et al.* (2000) define social space as "space as it is perceived and used by social groups" (2000: 762-763). Moreover:

(...) the term [social space] closely approximated the definitions of both community and natural area: a portion of an urban residential mosaic occupied by a homogenous group whose members are identifiable (...) by their shared values and attitudes, leading to common behaviour patterns. Such spaces are defined and given meaning by the group, however, and so are not readily identified from quantitative indicators alone (...). (Johnston *et al.* 2000: 762-763)

According to Buttimer, social space has subjective dimensions and is "the silent language of time and space" (1969: 417) that influence cultural variations of mankind. The geographer Sorre argues that each group tends to have its own specific social space which reflects its particular values, preferences and aspirations (Buttimer 1969: 419). Another researcher who Buttimer refers to is the sociologist Lauwe, who draws a distinction between the objective and subjective components of social space.

Objective social space was defined as 'the spatial framework in which groups live; groups whose social structure and organisation have been conditioned by ecological and cultural factors.' Subjective social space was defined as 'space as perceived by members of particular human groups.' Practically, then, urban spatial patterns were studied on two levels; (...) first in objective terms—that is, the spatial setting with its physical boundaries and communication network—and then in terms of the perceived dimensions and characteristics of that segment as these were subjectively identified by the occupants. In many cases objective and subjective 'spaces' failed to coincide—subjective space reflecting values, aspirations, and cultural traditions that consciously or unconsciously distorted the objective dimensions of the environment. (Buttimer 1969: 420)

It is in social space where people shape and perceive their room for action. Hindrances can be part of the objective social space, and then understood as physical and societal limitations, or part of the subjective social space, understood as the perceived limitations in society. According to Buttimer (1969) perceived hindrances do most often not coincide with the *real* objective hindrances which exist. A distinction between what individuals' *can do* and what they *believe* they are actually capable of is necessary.

Although the room for action is part of the objective social space, all room for action can be argued to be perceived by individuals, and then subjectively experienced. The room for action in social space and the conditions for action can then, to a certain extent, change over time. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that reality is socially constructed and that knowledge about the reality defines the perception of it. The reality is in this way subject to influence. This is a common approach within the social sciences, which is used here in order to raise doubt about the structures of hindrances. The question of reality and knowledge is initially justified by the fact of their social relativity and has to deal with not only the empirical variety of knowledge in human societies, but also with the processes by which any body of knowledge comes to be socially established as reality. Human knowledge is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations and there are certain processes that determine this knowledge. For Berger and Luckmann (1966), trying to understand these processes, is their main purpose. The aim in this thesis, is to point to the argument that there are processes in society deciding the knowledge of the objective room for action and the perceived (subjective) room for action, and therefore also hindrances to environmental action. According to Aronsson (1990), as well as Angelöw and Jonsson (1994), the room for action is either objectively or subjectively perceived. Berger and Luckmann (1966) claim that perceptions are created by and are dependent on level of knowledge. Humans live in societies which are dialectical relations between structural realities and human enterprise. These dialectical relations have constructed the reality throughout history. The perception of reality is in no way static, and people have the possibility to influence it. Pro-environmental action depends on the perception of reality, of what is possible to do and what is not. The perception of hindrances is part of that reality. Knowledge is necessary, in order to change those hindrances that are perceived as hindrances *beyond individual control*. Influencing individual environmental knowledge, by increasing the level of information and learning, might prevent such perceived hindrances. Some hindrances could, however, be considered easier to overcome, than others. What are the participants' perceived hindrances for environmental action?

All these areas are of importance and of course worth considering. The focus in this thesis, however, is on the participants' perceived hindrances to change their consumption patterns. The surroundings restrict the participants when trying to

change their consumption patterns, and the physical surroundings have to be measured in order to make it possible for the participants to change their consumption patterns. What, then, are the participants' perceived possibilities to make an impact on their patterns? The social space, or referring to Holden's (2001) term social surrounding, is where the participants live and shape their perceptions.

## Responsibility, Knowledge, Authority and Information

What are the participants' perceptions of responsibility for environmental issues in relation to the municipality and the national government? People tend to blame others for the problems so that the individuals do not feel any motive or responsibility to act environmentally friendly (Angelöw and Jonsson 1994).

In a report from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Wandén (1996) discusses the allocation of environmental responsibility between individuals, municipalities, businesses and the national authorities in Sweden after the introduction of A21. He argues that there might be a problem with the environmental policy when it comes to responsibility distribution and the role of democracy. The representative democracy creates disclaim of responsibility at the individual level. Wandén asks who should have the responsibility for the environment. His claims are based on three conditions: *insight, ethical judgement and efficiency*. Insight must be the responsibility of the government in cooperation with experts. This must be holistic and based on long-term policy. Wandén argues that ethical judgement is a matter that should concern us all. Nature should be prioritised and considered instead of human needs. The national authorities and the government should also make it easier and encourage the implementation of environmental decisions. A21 does not clarify the relations of the responsibility levels between actors. The main responsibility to implement the recommendations from the UN is, however, placed on the sovereign decision makers and the governments. According to A21, all actors in the society should participate and cooperate to comply with the recommendations of A21, but it does not say anything about who that should do what. A21 recommends activities, primarily on the local level, where initiative should come from the grass-root level. Wandén, on the other hand, claims that all kinds of environmental problems, e.g. global warming, cannot be resolved on the local level.

In Sweden, the environmental work was decentralised from an early stage, and the local activity is significant. The local commitment has thus restricted influence on higher level, and it has not become a normative rule to change individuals' lifestyles on a national level. Wandén points out the importance of bearing in mind that individual behaviour and consumption patterns are major contributors to environmental damage. From these arguments, both local and global levels are important when considering the allocation of responsibility. Wandén's ideal state would emerge when the roles and behaviours of politicians, civil servants, and private businessmen are complemented, or even exchanged by every person's responsibility for their own life and everyone's environment. According to Halkier (1997), pro-environmental normative position has been accepted and even institutionalised in several countries today. The environmental development:

(...) assigns co-responsibility for environmental problems to ordinary people in their everyday lives, problematizing their excessive use of resources and the polluting practices embedded in modern ways of life with a relatively high material standard of consumption. In the same way, ordinary people can be obliged to actively change their impact on the environment by redirecting ways of living and adopting less environmentally unsustainable patterns. (...) A number of public and private campaigns to improve some element of pollution or use of resources point to the individual, the family or the household as the key agents for improvement. (Halkier 1997)

The philosopher Per Ariansen (1992) argues that those who do not have knowledge about the consequences of their unintended actions do not normally become responsible for those consequences. Ignorance gives freedom from responsibility, but only when the ignorance is reasonable and not intentional. One thing is to be aware of the immediate damages another is the knowledge of the long-term effects. Information and education are not a one-way responsibility, but rather the responsibility of both the individual and the national authorities. According to Hans Lenk (Ariansen 1992: 226)<sup>23</sup> responsibility is a function of "power, impact and knowledge". When responsibility is connected to power, it must also be connected to the *freedom of movement* one has in relation to the performed actions. The responsibility increases with the level of authority one has over the choices of action which are made. It is not unreasonable that responsibility then is connected to authority, according to Lenk. Ariansen (1992) points out that moral responsibility,

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<sup>23</sup> Lenk, H. (1990) *Types of Responsibility*. (seminar article) Melbu: Nordland Akademi.

what is considered to be right in a cultural and national situation, is connected to circumstance where people are principally free actors. It is not a societal norm to be environmentally responsible in all parts of the world. According to Ariansen's (1992) argument, personal responsibility for global environmental effects is minimal; if responsibility is a function of power and impact, one can also claim that each of us has minimal influence on global warming. An individual sacrifice would be insignificant according to this kind of argument, but as a collective sacrifice it can make sense for the same reason.

When demands are small and not overwhelming, one can not easily dismiss them by pointing out the insignificant consequences by one's own effort [my translation]. (Ariansen 1992: 232)

A21 recommends that authorities should have the duty to mediate information to the members of the community and they should be able to receive and find it. If the information is easy to find, one might say that inhabitants' lack of knowledge is as much an individual responsibility as a societal one. According to the geographer Sally Eden (1993), people's behaviour is restricted by a public lack of proper information:

There is an implicit belief that information triggers pro-environmental behaviour and that lack of information therefore constrains agency and responsibility. A lack of responsible behaviour is therefore explicitly perceived by several group members to be the result of the public's relative lack of information. (Eden 1993: 1750)

The consumers' perception of external control by the society, by economics and by *others*, is according to Eden (1993: 1753), cultural constraints where people are dependent on a wider context beyond the individual's desires and priorities. This control permits some behaviour and restricts other, and does not depend on the perceived environmental responsibility. Some behaviour is environmentally "bad" but culturally "necessary", as Eden (1993: 1754) puts it. A lack of choice which is culturally and socially determined is perceived. The ability to influence the environment is culturally determined by agency and structure and constitutes boundaries in which agency can operate. There are also internal cultural constraints which are "dependent on the individual's perceptions and priorities of what constitutes a major sacrifice" (Eden 1993:1754). These individual values may or may not correspond with the values in society.

Who should have the responsibility for environmental issues? Angelöw and Jonsson (1994) have some noteworthy opinions on the topic. The cooperative organisation Europanel<sup>24</sup> let 40,000 European households describe their attitudes towards environmental issues. Among other statements, one sounded: “The government and the industry should be the forerunners on environmental issues, not the individual citizen”.<sup>25</sup> Twenty-three percent of Norwegian households agreed and as many as 83 percent of Swedish households agreed with the statement (Angelöw and Jonsson 1994: 88). Who is responsible for environmental issues? According to this research, the Swedes seem to have reached an agreement: governments and industries—not individuals—should be responsible and act as forerunners. However, Angelöw and Jonsson refer to another research, conducted by Sifo (1994: 89)<sup>26</sup>, where the public trust in different actors who are operating within the environmental area was estimated. Here, Swedes were the most confident in researchers, environmental groups and the universities. People had considerably less confidence in the public authorities, the business sector and the politicians. Comparing these two researches, the Swedish public want government and industry to do the job at the same time as they have less confidence in their way of handling these issues. As Angelöw and Jonsson (1994) argue, a possible explanation might be that Swedes are used to initiatives by the political authorities, and that the Swedish people behave in a way that seems subordinated the authorities. Daun brings up “the theory of the politically indoctrinated Swedes” (1996: 147). The Swedish Social Democrats, with their ambitions, “have actually succeeded in ‘taming people’,” as Enzensberger puts it (Daun 1996: 147). Daun points to the need to conform as a part of Swedish culture. He also claims that Swedes are less independent as for instance compared with the Finns with regards to their opinions, views and in their general attitudes.

The environmental policy of sustainable development implies that all actors in society should participate and cooperate to fulfil the recommendations of the Agenda. But as Wandén (1996) argues, it does not allocate tasks to any parties. The responsibility should be shared. But, not everyone has the insight, the ability to take the ethical judgements or act efficiently. How do the participants distribute the level

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<sup>24</sup> In Angelöw and Jonsson (1994)

<sup>25</sup> My translation.

<sup>26</sup> Sifo (1990) *Miljöbarometer*. Stockholm: Sifo.

of responsibility for the individual, for local politicians and for the government concerning certain environmental issues?

## Summary

The areas discussed in this part aims to understand the following parts in the thesis. Pro-environmental attitudes motivate consumer behaviour, even if individuals' patterns of ecologically responsible consumption vary (Moisander 1997). People are striving to find groups that satisfy their area of interests (Daun 1996) and the main motives of the participants in the environmental projects seem to be part of a fellowship with people devoted to environmental issues like themselves. The participants seem to first and foremost be motivated by the imagined community (Anderson 1991), where they become motivated to act when they know there are others also trying to make an environmental effort. There is, however, hindrances in social space (Johnston *et al.* 2000) and in the participants' room for action (Angelöw and Jonsson 1994) that may restrict their level of environmental effort. Such obstacles can be perceived both subjectively and objectively in social space. Hindrances, which are perceived in the subjective social space, can to some extent be affected by the participants themselves, if they for instance gain knowledge. The hindrances are also physical and belong to the objective social space. The hindrances which are objective could be measured and changed by for instance the government or the local authorities. The responsibility of environmental issues is a function of power, impact and knowledge (Ariansen 1992). Even if individuals' environmental actions viewed separately are not major contributors to environmental problems, it is still important to remember that individuals' behaviour and consumption patterns accumulate and cause environmental damage when viewed together (Wandén 1996). It can be difficult to expect individuals to search for and obtain all information necessary to take environmentally friendly measures; therefore the responsibility must be shared and taken on by many.

### 3. The Projects

The projects' approach rests on national environmental policy, which in turn is influenced by international environmental policy on sustainable development. The international environmental policy has influenced national environmental policy through A21 that was introduced and has been developed after the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. In this section the projects' approach and their connection to national environmental policy in Sweden and Norway are discussed. The national environmental policy is primarily discussed in terms of general aims. Then, the national policy regarding consumption and different policy instruments used to regulate and influence individual consumption is studied. The national environmental policy is crucial because its aspects have an impact on the perceptions among the participants in environmental projects like Grønn Hverdag and Eksjö Miljöteam in two different ways; 1) the projects' existence is a result of the national environmental policy, 2) the participants' perceptions of motives, hindrances and responsibility, in addition to the consumption patterns, are influenced by the official national policy. The participants' environmental knowledge and motive are influenced by the national aims. The concepts used by governmental and national authorities, such as sustainable development and the formulation in favour for sustainable development *think global, act local*, are part of the environmental awareness which the participants hold. Therefore, the participants' perceptions are influenced by national policy.

#### Miljöteam – a Local Strategy for Action

Eksjö Miljöteam is a part of the LA21-plan in the municipality. The municipality of Eksjö accepted an Environmental Policy in 1996 ("Directions for a Sustainable Development"), which is supposed to work as a guidance in all decisions made in the municipal administration (Lokaldelen 2005). The municipality has drawn up four conditions, called "Systemvillkår", which are based on the principal of the eco-cycling society. The purpose of these conditions is mainly to influence the environmental perceptions of all people who are living in Eksjö. Those conditions are in a shortened version:



- 1) maintain a sustainable use of resources
- 2) protect the local environment from chemical substances
- 3) show respect for the natural surroundings which holds the cycles where resources are sustained
- 4) distribute the world's resources in a fair way

Eksjö has been licensed to be called an “Eco-municipality” (SEkom)<sup>27</sup>. Eksjö Miljöteam is part of the local environmental policy and is in accordance with the four conditions called “Systemvillkår” (Municipality of Eksjö 2005b). The project was started in 1994. The project is developed from the activities and idealistic commitment which was formed through “Högländets Framtidsprojekt” in the early 1990's. A joint effort between four non-profit organisations arranged different kinds of seminars. At one of these seminars in 1993, “The Future's Lifestyle” (Framtidens Livsstil), the ideas for Eksjö Miljöteam were developed. When the project started, approximately 80 households joined the project. The responsible manager who started Eksjö Miljöteam the project was Karl-Gustav Björk, who is known as the enthusiast behind the project. The initiative was idealistic and Björk did not receive any salary during the period he was leader for the project. The project was mainly based on the idealistic effort of Björk, in addition to the Agenda 21-coordinator, Sven-Åke Svensson who is the contact person for the project today. At the project's peak in 1998 there were nine operative teams with between three to eleven households working together. The project's main concerns are to deal with the households' habits in relation to purchase, waste, energy, transport, ecological cultivation and biological multitude. The motto is that each and everyone can do a lot on their own, and the municipality is willing to help out. The idea of the project was inspired from the work in another municipality in Nacka, Sweden, where Miljöteam was introduced as an attempt to work with A21 in consultation with the inhabitants. This strategy has been used in several municipalities in Sweden afterwards. The strategy is based on networks which form study circles in neighbourhoods. The groups of households, usually neighbours, try to live more environmentally friendly through practical environmentally friendly measures within the household (Alström 1997). The team-households attempt to minimise the consumption of energy and the

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<sup>27</sup> SEkom is a national network organisation with approximately 60 municipalities whose aim is to be sustainable municipalities. The municipalities are cooperating and exchanging ideas and they commit themselves to work towards sustainability, regarding economical, environmental and social sustainability. See <http://www.sekom.nu/> for further information.

use of substances that are harmful to the environment. They try to choose environmentally friendly means of transport, increase the number of ecological products in the household, use less water, preserve the biological multitude, cultivate ecologically, recycle and compost household and garden waste. The individuals' experiences from the team work and their personal environmental commitment are supposed to be spread and that the ideas will have an impact on other households and their habits and engagement in turn. The Agenda 21-coordinator in Eksjö pointed out that the participants set good examples for other inhabitants in Eksjö (Svensson 2005a). In this way, he hoped to gradually recruit more people to the teams.

How does a Miljöteam function? Each team appoints a team leader, which works as a linkage to other teams and to the municipality (Alström 1997). The teams make an activity plan where the participants explain the intended work for each household that seems reasonable to obtain and that everyone undertakes to follow. The work runs as a kind of study circle. The municipality delivers a folder with information about recycling, composting, waste fees, eco-labelled products, energy-efficient alternatives and transports to each household. This material is successively complemented with new material from the municipality and from each team leader. The team members also have prioritised access to municipal services, as for example energy consultation and advisors.

The expenses of material, information and study trips for the participants were financially supported by the municipality between 1994 and 2002 with between SEK 5,000 and 20,000 yearly (Svensson 2005b). The project is then perceived as a municipal project which is part of the work with LA21. There are different opinions whether the project is presently active. According to some participants, some teams are no longer active. After Björk resigned as the responsible project leader in 2002, the Agenda 21-coordinator has no official responsibility for the future of the project. The funding of the project stopped when the project was considered as finished in 2003 (Svensson 2005a). Svensson claims that only ten percent of the total expenses were covered by the fundings. The rest was covered by voluntary efforts. However, some still regard Miljöteam as presently active partly because of the effect it has had on the participants. Some teams are also still working as social teams, focusing on other important issues in the neighbourhood. According to Svensson, there is still

activity in five or six teams (Aas 2005). The municipality is still advertising about Miljöteam on their homepage even if Svensson claims there is no official coordinator or funding for such an initiative today (Svensson 2005b).

Eksjö Miljöteam is part of the municipality's strategy to encourage people to live environmentally friendly by changing their consumption patterns and their life styles. The strategy is also supposed to create linkages between households and the local environmental agenda, which is produced by the municipality and the politicians. This is a way to create a dialogue on how a sustainable development can be drawn up between the municipality and the environmentally aware public as well as other interests in the society. The strategy, which Miljöteam is based on, is not only a municipal A21-project in Sweden, but is also an international phenomenon. The strategy of using study circles in practical environmental work in households has also been organised by *Global Action Plan for the Earth* (GAP 2005)<sup>28</sup> since 1996. GAP is an international non-profit organisation, which is working with so called *EcoTeams* (Holden and Norland 2004). The work of Miljöteam is inspired by GAP's strategy of working in teams and the two team strategies are very similar to each other. The work is not supposed to result in concrete information and advices, but the idea is that each participant shall be able to be aware of improvements within the household (Alström 1997). The Miljöteam project is thus a strategy towards a sustainable development developed in cooperation with the inhabitants in the municipality of Eksjö, and is based on a bottom-up perspective and local initiatives.

### **Swedish Environmental Policy and Consumption**

The environmental context from which the project emerges and which, in turn, it is influenced by, can be understood as based on national and international environmental discourse on sustainable development. When signing the A21 document in 1992, governments made themselves responsible for implementing sustainable development issues on a national level. Strategies on how to work towards a sustainable development should be developed in cooperation with the inhabitants and from a bottom-up perspective. Local initiatives were seen as an

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<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.globalactionplan.com> or <http://www.empowermentinstitute.net/> for further information.

important strategy. All sectors of the society were required to take an active part in the work (Lafferty and Meadowcroft 2000). This was the start of the current national work for a sustainable development in Sweden and on an international level.

Sweden's environmental situation is complex, as is its policy, the organisation of environmental protection and legislation. First of all, the Swedish Government aspires to make the idea of the *green welfare society* a reality (Government Offices of Sweden 2005). This includes the necessary use of new technology, construction and planning and to pursue an active energy and environmental policy. The goal is to work towards a modernisation and to make the society more resource-efficient together with new innovation, new jobs, growth and welfare. Sustainable development is the overall goal of government policy and all political decisions must take account of long-term economic, social and environmental impacts. The aim is to hand down a society to the next generation where the major environmental problems have been solved. The Government draw up 15 environmental quality objectives (15 Miljömål) in 1999. These environmental objectives are established "to guide Sweden towards a sustainable society" (SEPA 2005). Most of the objectives are to be achieved by the year 2020. The Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament) stresses sectoral responsibility. Government authorities, companies and other organisations are given clear responsibility for environmental issues in their area of activity. The 15 environmental quality objectives function as benchmarks for environment-related development in Sweden. None of these 15 environmental objectives explicitly bring up the importance of consumption.

The responsibility for consumption issues is distributed between different actors. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency claims in regard to environmental issues that all sectors of society must take their share of responsibility in their field of activity (SEPA 2005). There are a multiple number of national authorities that have been appointed as being overall responsible for the environmental quality objectives. This responsibility includes proposing and implementing measures needed as well as monitoring, evaluating and reporting the progress. The business sector is also responsible for their production in numerous ways. As an example, producers should have responsibility for their products' environmental impact throughout the products' entire lifecycle. The focus today is on production and waste; however, the major

environmental impact for many products is during the stage of use. Consumption of products involves energy consumption and diffuse spreading of hazardous substances. Therefore, IPP (Integrated Product Policy) is introduced as an instrument to help to achieve sustainable development, not just by reducing the adverse effects of goods and services on the environment but also by helping to change people's attitudes to consumption, thereby influence the demand for products in society (SEPA 2004a). IPP has an EU perspective and the European Commission adopted a Green Paper on IPP in 2001 with the objective of launching a debate on the role and possible measures that could be taken on a European Union level.

The Swedish Ministry of Environment (SMoE) focus on the responsibility of individuals, in view of the choices they make and the activities they perform (Government Offices of Sweden 2004). Individual activity and choices have a vast impact on production and consumption patterns and health issues. SMoE consider information and education as necessary tools to change people's values into a vision in line with the approach of sustainable development. Gardner and Stern claim that it is, however, important to remember that human action is not equate to individual behaviour (Gardner and Stern 2002: 7). The majority of the energy use and other environmentally destructive activities are traceable to the acts of corporations, businesses and governments, not individuals and households. Even so, let us not forget the impact they have on the environment. Gardner and Stern argue that "individuals can take effective collective action" in order to conserve energy and lessen pollution. Therefore, all actors' contribution is significant, and the environmental effects are the responsibility of all.

The Government decided in 1996, in order to promote the transition to an ecologically sustainable society in Swedish municipalities, to start funding Local Investment Programmes (LIP). The Municipality of Eksjö has received funding from LIP to build energy efficient houses. Local Investment Programmes were replaced by Climate Investment Programmes (Klimp) in 2002. This new programme is aimed more specifically at reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. Municipalities in Sweden share responsibility with a number of government agencies for ensuring compliance with legislation in the environmental area. These areas are mainly water supply, wastewater treatment, waste management, food safety, monitoring and

inspection. Their supervisory role includes providing advice and information to the municipal inhabitants.

LA21 has been utilised in Swedish municipalities since the Earth Summit in 1992. In practice, however, projects carried out in the name of A21, showed to support the traditional environmental policy rather than the new approach which should be introduced to sustainable development (Eckerberg 2000). Many municipalities have introduced new policy goals and instruments with concern for the approach of sustainable development. As an example, new forms of participation have been introduced where local groups, schools and local enterprise are included in the process. The bottom-up approach has been emphasised in several municipalities, such as in Eksjö.

Changing consumption and production practices demand major efforts and a combination of measures, which include public procurement policy, economic instruments, follow-up systems and information. Such information is provided by an array of different public and private organisations, including state agencies, municipalities, NGO's, media, industry and local consumer groups (Eckerberg 2000). Information for consumers is regarded as a key factor in changing consumption and production practices, where eco-labelling has been suggested as one of the most powerful instruments for changing consumer patterns. An action plan for sustainable consumption was developed in 1998, and contains measures to improve product information and testing, in order to enhance the demand for more ecologically sustainable products and services.

## Grønn Hverdag – a National Strategy for Public Mobilisation

Grønn Hverdag (GH) was founded in 1991<sup>29</sup> (GH 2001) and is a network of individuals, groups and organisations. The aim of GH is to get more people to choose environmentally friendly alternatives in their everyday lives and contribute to a sustainable development, both nationally and internationally. The network offers different kinds of information on their website, by telephone and in documents and

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<sup>29</sup> The network was previously named the “Environmental Home Guard” (Miljøheimevernet).

brochures. They also assist with the tools and methods needed for businesses, organisations and municipalities to carry out environmental plans. There are over 100,000 individual participants registered in the network and approximately 10,000 in Oslo (Holden and Norland 2004). GH is a cooperation of 17 voluntary organisations active in Norway (GH 2001). The organisations engage their members to take an active part in practical environmental work. GH has an ongoing cooperation with many municipalities all over Norway, where the network assists the municipalities with material and work methods in order to involve the municipal inhabitants to take part in local environmental work. The head office is situated in Oslo, in addition to ten other offices located around Norway. GH has a total number of 30 employees.

Individuals who want to become participants in GH have to fill out a form about the issues they are interested in and want information about (GH 2001). Individuals are encouraged to proceed towards an environmentally friendly alternative on these issues. The issues concerned are relating to certain areas or situations, like patterns and habits in the household, in the neighbourhood, at the grocery store and when travelling. When one has filled in the form, he or she advances as a participant in GH. Participants in the network get a magazine for free, which is distributed by the network four times each year. The magazine keeps the participants up-dated on environmental issues and offers suggestions on readings for environmentally aware consumers. GH arranges courses, lectures and meetings on different environmental themes that normally are open for everyone who is interested and are often free. It is also possible to order articles from the network for a small expense.

According to the former general manager in GH, Kristen Ulstein, the network does not try to push people to get new participants registered. Outreach work is not desirable from GH's point of view (Ulstein 2005). The aim is not to be persuasive or use aggressive or pressing techniques. They want people to find GH themselves. Voluntarily participation is a norm in the network. GH aims to plead the consumers' cause towards the authorities and producers.

GH is working towards five concrete environmental objectives decided upon in 2001 (GH 2001);

- 1) reduce consumption of raw material
- 2) reduce energy consumption
- 3) reduce discharges of hazardous pollution
- 4) reduce the amount of waste
- 5) preserve the diversity in nature

GH and the municipality of Oslo are working close and have a developed and active cooperation. The municipality is using GH as a resource unit for their inhabitants in a lot of different situations: for seminars, arranging courses, distributing information etc. GH aims to make individuals responsible for those environmental actions which individuals have the possibility to make an impact on. If there are no responsible actors involved, environmentally friendly consumption is not possible. GH claims that actors like producers, salesmen, the government, media and organisations all have their functions and hence, their potential possibilities to influence. They are all responsible for their functional area.

The Ministry of the Environment in Norway has been assisting the network economically since GH was established in 1991. The government subsidies<sup>30</sup> in addition to the income they receive from municipalities, organisations, institutions and businesses for performed services, represent a yearly turnover of approximately NOK 15 million<sup>31</sup> (Fremstad 2005). GH gives an account for their yearly expenses and planned activities to The Ministry of the Environment in order to get government subsidies.

### **Norwegian Environmental Policy and Consumption**

In a speech held by the Norwegian Minister of the Environment, Knut Arild Hareide, at the Nordic Roundtable in Oslo in March 2005, he said that:

It is (...) important to underline the role of consumers in sustainable development. I am convinced that customers and consumers – given the choice – make the right choices. Consumers look for *quality*. (...) More and more

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<sup>30</sup> Government subsidies represent approximately NOK 7.5 millions for 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Information from Eirin Fremstad concerns the year 2005.



people consider it an important quality if a product is made with less energy, less hazardous substances or causes less waste. (...) Norwegian consumers were recently given extensive new rights in a new act on access to environmental information. This includes the right to information from private enterprises, not just from public authorities. (NMoE 2005c)<sup>32</sup>

Hareide points out that *we* have particularly responsibility, interpreted as the citizens of Norway, to contribute actively in the work on sustainable development. He also claims that different actors in the society should take part in the process, in order to give consumers the information about the alternatives available for an environmentally friendly living.

GH is one actor that offers environmental information to consumers. The establishment of the GH was based on the initiative to follow-up the Earth Summit conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro 1992 (Langhelle 2000). GH was set up by the NGO community and is funded by the government. As Langhelle puts it, the aim of GH is “to promote environmentally friendly choices by consumers and families. “The organization does not have ‘members’, only ‘participants’, which reflects the fact that to join you have to commit yourself to certain types of action” (Langhelle 2000: 195). Even if GH started as a governmental initiative and is mainly funded by the government, the network prepares its agenda with no conditions and is independent of governmental decisions. GH draws up standpoints, activities and profile on their own terms (GH 2001). When GH was established, the network was seen as an important tool for changing production and consumption patterns by the government, which also became the main purpose and aim of the project.

The Norwegian Government presented a National Action Plan for Sustainable Development, National Agenda 21, to the Parliament in the National Budget for 2004 (NOU 2005: 05, NMoF 2005). The Official Commission was asked to develop a core set of indicators as an aid to policies to enhance sustainable development in Norway. The national action plan consists of six theme areas which are seen as particularly important in relation to national sustainability. None of these six theme areas explicitly bring up individual private consumption of goods and services as a

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<sup>32</sup> [online]; See the References.

problem for a sustainable development. Some of the core set of indicators in the National A21 focus, however, on energy and resource use on a national level.

In the report (St. meld nr 21) to the Parliament (Stortinget) from 2005, the government's environmental policy and the environmental status in Norway are analysed (NMoE 2005a). The report is extensive and includes different relevant areas. One of the important areas which need to be measured is waste and recycling levels. The recycling levels are evaluated and have to increase. Consumers are included in the discussion, as main actors who have to change their consumption practices. Local authorities are also encouraged to mobilise the people in the local community to take an active part in the environmental work.

The Norwegian Ministry of the Environment has put forward an Environmental Action Plan for 2003-2006 (NMoE 2002). In the Action Plan, important areas are highlighted as national and strategic objectives. The areas are prioritised environmental objectives and cover the most central Norwegian environmental interest areas. Individual consumption is not prioritised in the Environmental Action Plan. The focus of policy is on resource management and use, as well as nature preservation.

Langhelle (2000) argues that sustainable production and consumption *is* one of the key issues in the Norwegian understanding of sustainable development. However, this understanding takes a global perspective and focus mainly on the impacts of high production and consumption levels in the industrialised nations, thus the effects it has on the unevenly distribution of economic resources and ecological space for the *poor* nations. Nationally, Langhelle argues, the follow-up of A21 has mainly focused upon waste management and eco-efficiency (2000: 195). The focus in Norwegian environmental policy has put efforts on policies which are mainly directed towards business and industry with aspects of the outputs of high resource levels and energy use.

The Norwegian Ministry of the Environment (NMoE 2003) decided to follow-up the EU Commission's communication on the strategy concerning Integrated Product Policy (IPP) and implement it on national policy level, as they have done in Sweden.

IPP is a strategy used to view products in relation to their whole life cycle, which means to include the use of resources, production, consumption and disposal of products and services. The EU-commission wants to improve current standards and product-related tools like EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme), eco-labelling and information. Policy on household consumption as regarded to energy use, eco-labelling, waste and recycling and transport are issues dealt with by multiple actors. The implementation strategies for waste and recycling issues are the responsibility of municipalities, as is the public transport. On energy use, there are different actors advising the public on energy efficiency, mainly within the public administration.

In the White Paper 46 (NMoE 1989) the government decided that sustainable development considerations are the responsibility to be ensured by the respective sectors. The sector authorities, in areas such as agriculture, fisheries, energy and transport, are responsible for that the area they represent is in accordance with sustainable development. Langhelle argues that “implementation was to be the responsibility of the sector authorities; the actual goals within the different sectors were to be set by government” (Langhelle 2000: 182).

Norwegian municipal administrations have been responsible for policy areas crucial for environmental policy for decades. The government has strongly encouraged municipalities to work out LA21 plans since 1996 and from that point forward (Langhelle 2000). Municipalities should according to Langhelle, relate to global environmental problems as national environmental goals and look for local solutions to these problems. Local environmental policy, LA21, is supposed to treat consumption as an environmental problem. Consumption and life style efforts have been targeted in some of the LA21 processes at municipal level (Bjørnæs and Norland 2002). The municipality of Oslo has cooperated extensively with GH and their network to better target this policy area.

All in all, the focus in Norwegian environmental policy is mainly on nature preservation and resource management. Consumption and production policy is, first and foremost, directed towards the role of the private enterprises. The individual consumption is, however, integrated as contributing to e.g. the high waste level.

People's energy use is also regarded as high. On such areas, the Norwegian people are encouraged to change their consumption practices. GH is one of few initiatives which focus on consumption as an environmental problem.

## Summary

I have briefly described environmental policy relations through the use of documents and literature, which in some ways concern consumption. GH is mainly part of the national agenda on sustainable development, while Miljöteam in Eksjö is primarily based on local environmental policy. Sustainable development policy is a function of the Brundtland-report "Our common future" from 1987 where the concept was defined. A21, with its 40 chapters adopted as one of the accords at the Rio Summit in 1992, considered consumption in chapter four as a problem for sustainable development. Sustainable development does not only refer to environmental components, but also economic and social components. It is difficult to find a clear policy regarding individual consumption in Norway and Sweden, and actual policy instruments directed towards consumers especially. It is particularly hard to find definitions of problems related to high individual consumption in Norwegian environmental policy. Ulstein in GH claims that it is because economic interests related to consumption have the highest priority in Norway (Ulstein 2005). A possible change demands that politicians do not encourage increased consumption in the same way as they are doing now. The main responsibility to work on sustainable environmental consumption should be put on politicians and business according to Ulstein. Svensson, the Agenda 21-coordinator in Eksjö, also finds politicians' attitudes and unwillingness to change values and habits that concern consumption as a problem (Svensson 2005). He wants that politicians', as decision-makers, should act as forerunners; something which Svensson claims is not the case. Stefan Edman (SOU 2004) put forward a report where he argues for an alternative consumption in Sweden and perhaps elsewhere. A kind of consumption that: "increases well-being and reduces environmental impact" and invests in "education, the care of relatives, culture in different forms" and which takes place at the local level (SOU 2004: 20). He also argues that politicians need to discuss and consider people's values, attitudes and habits in favour of a more caring lifestyle. The daily consumption should be characterised "with the benefit of a reduction in the use of resources, less

environmental impact and fewer negative effects on physical and mental health” (SOU 2004: 21). This “new scope for consumption” does not focus on economic visionaries but on life qualities.

A real break-through on sustainable development policy is not possible without an attitude change among politicians and their full use of means of control. Consumers seem to be defined as included actors in the Swedish policy on sustainable development, at least when studying documents and reports published by the government and the authorities (SEPA 1996, SEPA 2000, SOU 2000: 52).

Consumers are, however, included when it comes to attitude change in the first place, but not change of action. According to Gardner and Stern (2002), long-term effects of working consciously on attitude change, through information and education, could have a positive effect on consumption.

The national policies described in this section are part of the same discourse as the projects included in this thesis; hence the participants’ aims to change their consumption patterns. The participants’ actions in the local community have been and are influenced by the political agenda both nationally and internationally.

## 4. The Participants

### Miljöteam

#### **Motives for Joining Eksjö Miljöteam**

The participants became part of Miljöteam years ago and expressed that to be a part of the fellowship was an important factor for joining the Miljöteam<sup>33</sup>. The reason for becoming involved in a team was personal invitation by the team leader, as one informant explained. That informant felt that everyone else was already a part of the fellowship, and was afraid to be left outside. He stated: “the entire neighbourhood had joined the fellowship already” (Informant B). He felt almost like he had no other choice but to join the team, and the safest way to be accepted in the neighbourhood was by joining the fellowship, which in this case happened to be the Miljöteam. That does not exclude the fact that most of the informants are actually interested in environmental issues. There are others in the neighbourhood who do not participate in the team. They were not interested in the team’s business. Drawing on Daun’s argument (1996) that Scandinavians are eager to be part of a community, suggests that perhaps those who are not part of Miljöteam, are part of other fellowships that satisfy their area of interest.

Many of the participants are acquaintances from other voluntary organisations they had been part of for a longer period of time. The participants who know each other from other organisations, decided to start up Miljöteams in their local neighbourhoods and try to recruit other neighbours as well. According to one source, the recruitment method of knocking on doors and personal invitation from the would-be team leaders was understood as persuasion in order to get households to join the teams. However, most of the people who received invitations were curious about what it was, and thought it could not hurt to look it up. All-in-all, they did not reject their personal interest in the environment and were open-minded for the new project. This was something new and innovative going on at that time.

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<sup>33</sup> Eksjö Miljöteam is regarded as an ongoing project.

A common goal for almost everyone was to meet other like-minded people and to exchange ideas and experiences with individuals who are occupied of environmental issues. It seems crucial to know that, “We are not alone; there are others [like us]” (Informant C). The motives for joining Miljöteam, except from being part of the fellowship, were to implement the ideas that concerned a more energy-efficient lifestyle and perhaps to save some money too. The motives were not necessarily affiliated with the special interest in an environmentally friendly lifestyle. The environmental aspect seemed to be more like a bonus for the efficacy- and money-saving matter, and it sounded like it could not hurt to show some consideration for the environment at the same time. It can, however, be claimed that the informants are environmentally conscious people, or at least became so, because of their experience with Miljöteam and the information they have obtained as part of the project.

As has been mentioned, many of the participants have been involved in different kinds of environmental or nature-oriented organisations. They also consider their practices and pro-environmental behaviour frequently. An example is the holding of household compost recycling, which almost all of the participants are occupied with. There are less satisfied opinions among some participants who claim that: “the environmental issues were forced upon us, the activity led to “Grannsamverkan”, [neighbourhood watch] which is the operative activity today” (Informant G). The Miljöteam in the neighbourhood where this informant live have put efforts in another kind of project, “Grannsamverkan”. The informant is happier about what Miljöteam came to be, rather than the initial initiative of Miljöteam. However, the same informant is in no way uninterested in environmental issues. He just felt that it is too much focus on the environmental discussion in the team. The number of team members in his team is almost consistent, even extended, but the team issue have developed into another direction. The team still exist and the participants work together in a neighbourhood watch-group (Grannsamverkan) protecting the neighbourhood from burglars and help each other to look after the local community. The fellowship that remain can be understood as contributing to higher responsibility for each other within the fellowship and as a kind of control-group making sure everyone fulfils their duties. One of the other teams does also have a common resource which they have a joint responsibility for. The small river Emån runs through Eksjö and through one of the neighbourhoods where there is a Miljöteam,

and further into the Baltic Sea. The neighbourhood once decided that they should keep the stream and the area around it in the residential district clean and those of the local inhabitants who wish to do so, gather once or twice a year to do that together. It turned out to be a successful management activity. It seems like it is in the team-members interest to maintain the *good spirit*, which exists in the neighbourhood. This is still the case. The case of Emån is a kind of community management project which is not dependent on central governmental regulations or externally imposed incentives. Neither does it depend on organised programs of persuasion or information. According to Hardin (1968) this would not be possible, and is in opposition to Hardin's argument. Hardin argues that individuals will only make use of resources for own profit, and would never care for an area meant for the commons. The Emån-project in Eksjö, on the other hand, has lasted because of individuals' own interest in the surroundings. Not self-interest, but for the common interest in Emån and the neighbourhood.

The informants have received environmental information they might not have got if they were not a part of the Miljöteam. A partial motive for joining Miljöteam was to get access to information and to take environmentally friendly measures. Almost everyone claim that their behaviour, habits and attitudes have changed in some way. Their behaviour has been most affected, according to the informants, and they claim they are conscious about their actions. Two informants claim that the participation in the project has not influenced their consumption patterns, nor their environmental values. One of these informants said: "No, I already knew about these things" (Informant F). Another informant is satisfied with the affect the participation has had on his positive thinking, although "it sometimes felt like coercion, and I couldn't stand that" (Informant G). If one chooses to act environmentally friendly, it requires a considerable amount of time, money and effort compared with if one chooses to be non-environmentally friendly. As an individual, one has to consider, justify and accept certain behaviour. Are people motivated enough to take part in organised action, like the activity going on in Miljöteam? The choices one makes might be individual and motivated, and the choices are not necessarily the same for all the participants in Miljöteam. Choices depend on individual considerations, and individual perceptions on how and what individuals should do to obtain a sustainable development. One informant claims that, "I would really like to be more involved,



because then I would get a lot of ideas. [I think] many more should join the team, in order to get committed” (Informant F). There are a multitude of perceptions of what needs to be done, because the complexity of environmental problems and the view on solutions vary from person to person, even if people belong to the same group.

## **Consumption Patterns**

### **Purchase**

Most of the informants in Miljöteam said that they purchase environmentally friendly products frequently, products which are available in local shops. Price is here an important factor: “I try [to purchase eco-friendly products], but it’s expensive!” (Informant E). The most common products they purchase are those which are the easiest to get hold of, like cleaning and sanitary products, detergents, dishwashing products, and foods like milk, fruit and vegetables, and household products. For one informant, the reasons for buying these products instead for the *less eco-friendly* ones are to avoid chemically produced products. The same person claim that subconscious choices affect the purchase of eco-labelled products, like fruit and vegetables, depending on where the products are placed on the shelf.

It is hard to say if the participants purchase more or less eco-products compared to the norm. The impression is that the participants do try. But for different reasons, such as supply and expenses, it is hard to purchase eco-products only. In 1999, approximately 2.5 percent of the private consumption in Sweden was purchase of eco-labelled products and services, calculated as a share of the total private consumption (SCB 2004a). Research by the Swedish Consumer Agency in 1998 showed that nine out of ten Swedes consciously purchased eco-labelled products (Swedish Consumer Agency 1998).

### **Waste and Recycling Habits<sup>34</sup>**

The refuse collection in Eksjö offers collection of three kinds of waste from three different dustbins that are picked up outside each house.

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<sup>34</sup> Supplementary statistics on waste and recycling from Sweden is included in Appendix 4.

Each household has to sort the rubbish in three different bags; a red one for incinerating waste, a green one for organic waste and an optional bag for other waste products that do not fit into any of the other categories. There are recycling stations placed around the municipality for glass, paper, metal, textile, rigid plastic, batteries etc. Other things such as furniture, hazardous waste, electronic waste etc, can be handed in at the municipality's dump. The different services offered by the municipality are free of charge, except from the refuse collection. Free charges are positively received by most of the informants and they express that it help them being environmentally friendly. One informant said: "I'm very careful with that [recycling]. I hand in hazardous waste at the dump, and that's free of charge" (Informant E). Apart from the economic value of being eco-friendly, Miljöteam in itself seem to have helped some of the participants to change their recycling habits: "After we joined Miljöteam the quantity of waste has reduced" (Informant F). However, some of the informants are confused and think the refuse system can be difficult to understand; how things are supposed to be sorted and where it should be delivered is most confusing. One informant also expressed disappointment over the municipality's way of handling waste at the dump where he claimed it is all mixed. The lack of interest from the authorities to deal with misunderstandings and problems is expressed with resignation.

Concerning waste and organic recycling habits, the Miljöteam-participants seem to make use of compost recycling to a high degree. All the informants, bar one, hold private compost recycling. If almost all the participants in Miljöteam hold private compost recycling, in addition to the organic refuse collection managed by the municipality, one can argue that the participants seem to have a high degree of organic recycling management. The inhabitants of Eksjö recycled 63.6 kilos waste per person on average in 2003. The amount of household waste in Eksjö the same year was 202 kilos per person (Lokaldelen 2005). The household waste level was much lower compared to national statistics, and the average level in Sweden reached approximately 470 kilos per person in 2002 (SCB 2004b). From national statistics, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency states that almost ten percent of the household waste was treated through biological management in 2003 (SEPA 2004b).

## Transport

The public transport system in Eksjö keeps buses and trains running between the districts within the municipality and the town centre, as well as between other towns near Eksjö. There is no public transport system within the town centre. The informants were asked how far they had to travel to their place of employment and how they got there. Six of the informants have their working place within relatively short distance, within the town centre of Eksjö. The distance varies from a few meters (one informant lives and works in the same building) to two kilometres. The other two informants are working outside the municipality. One of the *outside-the-municipality-workers* works in the municipality right next to Eksjö, in Nässjö, 20 kilometres away. The last one has a job that involves a lot of travelling and is working within a radius of 30-40 kilometres back and forth. Five of the informants travel to their place of work by foot or bicycle. Four of these informants walk during the winter season, and cycle during summer. One informant sometimes uses the car to get to work, even if she works within a radius of one kilometre. The informant who works in Nässjö, cycles in summer and drives his car during the winter season. Only one informant travels to work by car as the only way of transport. None of the informants in Eksjö Miljöteam use public transport to travel to work.

The National Travel Survey from 2001 provides information about travelling and its purpose to Swedish people (SIKA 2001). Forty-nine percent of all journeys are ones made to and from work/school or business journeys. Of all the journeys to and from work, 61 percent are made by car. Of those journeys longer than 50 kilometres, close to 91 percent are made by car. Walking or cycling is the most used option in half of the shortest work trips, those below five kilometres. Of those who travel by foot or bicycle where the travel purpose is to get to work/school, the travel distance per day is on average 0.5 kilometres. Those who use the car for the same purpose have an average driving distance of 9.2 kilometres each day. When comparing the statistics from this survey with the participants travel habits in Miljöteam, it seems like the use of car to and from work is much less frequent among the participants. The participants' walking and cycling habits, regarding to trips below five kilometres, are similar to the figures presented in the survey. The informants do not, however, use

public transport to get to work. Twelve percent of the work trips are made by public transport (SIKA 2001).

### **Environmental Investments<sup>35</sup>**

Most of the informants first said they have not made any specific environmental investments in their households. One informant explained it like this: “I haven’t made any investments; [because] my apartment will soon be renovated” (Informant H). But after some consideration, they mentioned a few things, albeit some less environmentally friendly, like installation of an oil-condensing furnace system. The most frequently mentioned installations are insulation (windows, roofs, walls) or different heating systems like furnace (both oil-fired furnace and environmentally approved wood-fueled furnace) district heating system, wood-fueled stove or an air-pump system for heating. Other things mentioned are light bulbs and A-rated<sup>36</sup> fridges or freezers. However, when asked about specific investments, most of the informants had made some of those things on the list. The list consists of:

1) *Different kinds of insulation*: four informants said they have consciously insulated their homes. Several informants said that such installations have been implemented gradually, depending on their economical situation and the time available.

2) *Electric installations, e.g. energy-saving lighting, low energy light bulbs and appliances*: three informants have consciously chosen A-rated appliances (washing machine, fridge or freezer). One informant has low energy light bulbs everywhere, while three others have some. One informant does not have environmentally friendly (energy-efficient) household appliances in his home, but he has it in his summer house, which had recently been purchased.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Supplementary statistics on energy in Sweden is included in Appendix 4.

<sup>36</sup> “The EU Energy Rating measures energy efficiency on a seven point scale from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient). The rating covers a variety of household appliances including fridges, freezers and fridge-freezers, washing machines, electric tumble driers, combined washer-driers, lamps, electric ovens and air conditioners. By law, all retailers in the EU must display an energy efficiency rating on these products. A product with an A rating will have passed a rigorous, impartial testing procedure, (...) [to] be sure its high energy efficiency” (Europa 2005) [online]; see the References.

<sup>37</sup> Most of the informants expressed uncertainty regarding to certification on appliances and light bulbs as well as what kind of bulbs and lighting they usually purchased.

3) *Effective heating system, room thermostat*: Two informants have access to a district heating system, one informant has an environmental approved wood fuel stove with thermostat and another informant has an air-pump system for heating, but has an oil heating system for hot water. The other people have heating systems such as an oil/wood heating system or an electric central heating system but with a room thermostat. One person pointed out that: “I still have an oil heating system. I wasn’t asked when they were digging [to install] district heating here outside, so it never came about” (Informant D).

4) *Water saving shower heads and water taps*: Five informants have either both or one of the saving water installations. One informant thinks that it does not matter and said: “I don’t think we have a water-saving shower head. Perhaps we had it before, but we’re thrifty anyway” (Informant E).

5) *Composting*: Seven of the informants have either organic hot composter or garden bins. One informant and her family are vegetarians and therefore only need to have a garden bin.

6) *Other things mentioned*: One informant pointed out that she uses re-usable nappies for her baby. Another informant has invested in a new and better car, which is more environmentally friendly than the old one.

Drawing on these statements and the participants’ behaviour, the participants in Miljöteam seem to make a conscious effort for the environment, to the extent that they do what is possible for them to do. These areas of consumption mentioned here are the prioritised areas which the project focuses on. The consumption patterns of the participants in Eksjö Miljöteam are discussed in the later chapter entitled Discussion. There are, however, hindrances that limit the participants to do more than they would like to. What kind of hindrances do the participants express as delimiting their actions?

### **Hindrances to Action**

The participants became part of the teams and the fellowship partly to contribute to a sustainable development, by keeping the household consumption as environmentally

friendly as possible. While the participants are trying to act environmentally friendly, individual and societal hindrances might limit them from doing so. The hindrances are individually perceived and differ from each other, and can be linked to the perceptions they have on the possibilities to influence the environmental issues they think are important. In this section, the perception of the possibility to make an impact as an individual in the household and in the community as well as the perception of hindrances, are viewed.

Three of the informants claim they are fairly able to influence the local community with regards to those environmental issues they think are important. However, the informants feel an overall restricted possibility to influence certain issues. One informant said: “It feels like a tiny drop in the ocean. The possibility to influence might be through purchase of goods. Perhaps the recycle system works in Eksjö, but not in Nässjö. What happens then?” (Informant C). Purchase habits are understood as easier to influence than the recycling system. Here, the idea of the fellowship becomes clear, as it seems easier to make an environmental effort and influence the society when they know others are making an effort as well. The abstract fellowship that consists of environmentally conscious people forms a fellowship of people who know that their effort is significant, especially together with others. Particularly, the informants express individual hindrances for not being able to act in the community enough. The hindrances are lack of economic resources, not having time, laziness, convenience and resignation. One informant also states that the commitment have weakened over time. The slight transition between societal and individual hindrances can be found in statements like: “Lack of knowledge makes one unaware of what to do” (Informant F). This can be interpreted as both a societal hindrance and an individual challenge, because of the mutual cooperation that has to take place when something should be communicated and exchanged, in this case environmental information.

Most of the informants seem to feel they could have done more, but that they are not motivated or inspired to do so. They feel that they are fighting against bureaucracy and restrictions set by the municipality or the government. Decisions are taken and regulations are made, without any possibility to influence them. Systems in the municipality, as for example the recycling system, can be improved because some of

the informants think it is not good enough. Only politicians and the decisions they make can improve the quality of such systems. If someone tries to influence the system, the public or politicians, the changing process is too slow. Things will not happen over night. Money, time and patience are a must in order to make changes. Another obstacle and explanation are the norms in the society which are not based on pro-environmental living. Some of the participants feel they are struggling to make an environmental effort, because the society does not appreciate their actions. These informants argue that if the society does not value the effort towards the greater good of the environment, it serves no purpose. The inspiration is missing because not many people encourage environmental healthy living. Societal hindrances are perceived as the poor efforts of others (persons, institutions, the system or authorities). “The [political] approach and the politicians’ judgement” (Informant G), are perceived as hindrances. The societal hindrance, that frustrates some of the informants, is the structural system which is based on materialistic values where economic growth and high profit are given priority over the care for the environment. In the contemporary society nature is controlled and resources are exploited, and as one informant said dejectedly: “it doesn’t help no matter what you say” (Informant D). Structural hindrances, caused by the authorities, where there are no choices of being environmentally friendly, are expressed as a limitation for environmental action: “I have an option, but there are not many alternatives to choose from” (Informant E).

When the informants were asked about the possibility to act environmentally friendly in their own homes, the answers were much more optimistic. All of the informants argue that they have great possibilities to act eco-friendly in their own homes. Lack of information seem to be a general problem, where some informants express the difficulty to find and obtain information about environmentally friendly goods they want and would have chosen to have in their homes, if only they had known about them. A lack of information is also mentioned as a restriction. One half of the eight informants said there are no hindrances that make them unable to act environmentally friendly in their own homes, except from the amount of time. To upgrade the home takes time and have to be done gradually. Economic hindrances are the most common cause for not making the homes more environmentally friendly. Economic hindrances might be understood as both an individual and a

societal challenge. It can be understood as an individual challenge when one cannot afford environmental investments. This can also be a question of priorities. Perhaps, it could be an idea to reduce some other household expenses in order to afford the investments. When economic hindrances are of societal character, goods and services are often too expensive for individuals to invest in, at the same time as the market is not always willing to ease up on the economic pressure. Convenience and lack of motivation are also considered challenges for not changing the environmentally friendly standard in the homes.

As pointed out earlier in this section, the perception that individual environmental effort feels like “a tiny drop in the ocean” seems to be strong. The informants in Eksjö seem to agree that individuals on their own are not so strong compared to those working together as a group. One informant said that “I’m all alone, and as a person on my own, I’ve little influence [on environmental issues]” (Informant C). In this way, as part of a group the informants feel stronger, as holding a louder voice in the society, and are then acting like a fellowship, in which all have the same kind of motives. Being an individual, who tries to influence the society, is perceived as a kind of hindrance. When they know there are others on *the same side*, doing the same things, they feel the actions are more important and will make a difference. The imagined community of environmental conscious people, worldwide, can help on the motivation. For some informants the local community is enough to increase the motivation. But most of the informants ask for more, and are sure that only if they had known that the environmental community (that there were more environmentally conscious people) is bigger, they would been able to do more. Coordinated action on a national level in the, first place, would relieve the pressure and encourage to environmentally adapted acting. However, some informants are very enthusiastic already, and think their environmental effort is valuable, because they are convinced that it is needed. They are already acting *together* with others in the imagined community, both nationally and internationally.

Most of the informants claimed that voluntary organisations’ possibilities to influence the environmental situation are fairly good; two informants said they have great possibilities and another one said their chance to affect the environmental situation is limited. The voluntary organisations can affect the environmental



situation because “they are many more to act” (Informant C). The more people who get together, the more powerful they become. Another informant argued that organisations are taken seriously, are respected and are able to create an opinion, as e.g. The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SNF) and Greenpeace. One informant also pointed out that a group can influence more and use alternative strategies to reach more people and said: “The more people, the better! They can [for example] arrange campaigns.” (Informant H). Two informants are more negative as to how and if organisations are able to act, and said that even here, lack of time is a problem. Another informant claimed that not many people care what so ever. However, organisations can discuss with local politicians about what they believe is important, and provide helpful information; “they are useful at the local level, [and they] offer information about purchase of goods” (Informant A). Another informant is occupied with established and forceful organisations and their validity as well as credibility. She said: “Greenpeace, for instance, who gets attention and provides people with environmental information, is important and their activity makes you interested. You can trust that they do what they are able to do” (Informant F). Only one informant thinks that the possibilities for organisations to influence the environmental situation are limited and said that organisations are struggling, as everyone else, and it is not easy for them to get attention.

The businesses’ and industries’ possibilities to influence the environmental situation are a topic that most of the informants are preoccupied with. The informants perceived the whole sector as a hindrance. According to the informants, businesses and industries make up a powerful sector which not always does as much as it can. Three of the informants claim that businesses and industries have fairly good opportunities to influence the environmental situation, while five informants said great opportunities. “They have great opportunities to make an impact, maybe greater than most. But, they might claim to have limited possibilities” (Informant F). The businesses and industries can influence the environmental situation in regards to the industrial process and means of production. The informants ask for more responsible actions in relation to production, energy use, discharges, and air pollution. More producers can make use of environmental certification systems and commit themselves to perform liable and produce goods and services into line with the environment. Still, some of the informants express doubt towards those who have

signed an environmental certificate already and the informants claim they do not make more environmental improvements afterwards. “They just have to attend to their activity. They have signed a certification contract they must relate to.” (Informant D). Two other informants put weight on the communicative, relational and ethical aspect that the sector has to consider. The sector should make use of the advantages it has of possibilities to influence both the authorities and people, morally: “They can discuss with politicians. It should be in their interest to get involved and [make ethical] considerations, and ask (...) what is crucial and decisive” (Informant A). The businesses and industries are those who get most criticism from the informants. It seems like the informants distrust the activities and their environmental effort of the sector in general. This view is shared by many of the informants: “They could have done so much more then they are now. But it’s a question of willingness” (Informant G).

### **Responsibility for Consumption Issues and Action**

Comparing the participants’ answers to the questions “How are the possibilities for you to influence what you think are important environmental issues in the household and in the community/society?” and “How are the possibilities for voluntary organisations and businesses to influence the environmental situation?” and the classifying card section where individual, municipal and governmental/international responsibility is placed on different sustainable consumption issues, the pattern is more or less clear-cut. The participants feel that as an individual the possibilities to act are limited, but the more environmentally aware people working collectively, the easier it is to act. The participants were asked how much responsibility different actors have or should have for issues related to consumption. The distribution of the issues tells us something of who the participants think should have the most responsibility for the certain environmental issues.

The results from the sorting section, where the informants allocated responsibility to 1) oneself (individual), 2) the municipality and local politicians (in Eksjö) and 3) the government, the EU and the UN, showed differences between the three levels as well as between the statements on sustainable consumption issues (see the Methodology),

where the highest responsibility was placed on national and international authorities. The participants had four responsibility level alternatives.

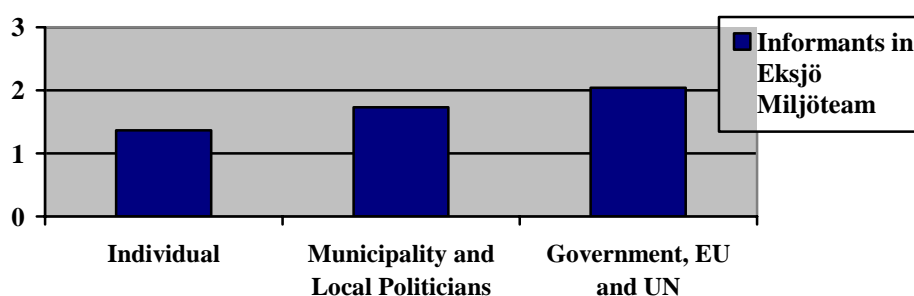


Figure 1. Perceived responsibility; of individual, of municipality and local politicians, and of government and international authorities (EU and UN) in Eksjö Miljöteam.

The responsibility increase in relation to higher authority level; most responsibility is given to the government and international authority level, then the municipality level and least to the individual level. The higher the actors are placed in the hierarchy, the greater responsibility. And the greater responsibility, the more environmental action is expected from them. Overall, the participants claim there is a shared responsibility for environmental issues among different actors, dependent on the possibilities the actors have to make an impact on the environmental situation.

How do the participants distribute the level on responsibility for the individual, for the municipality and local politicians, and for the government and international authorities, concerning certain environmental issues?

Table 2. Most and least important issue of responsibility, for the individual, for the municipality and local politicians, and for the government, the EU and the UN according to the participants in Eksjö Miljöteam.

|  | Individual                              | Municipality and Local Politicians                    | Government, EU and UN                                 |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Most important issue of responsibility</b>  | -Use energy efficiently                 | -Distribution of information and educational material | -Reduce consumption and discharges of toxic chemicals |
| <b>Least important issue of responsibility</b> | -Engage different groups in the society | -Engage different groups in the society               | -Engage different groups in the society               |

Table 2 shows the level of responsibility for certain issues that the informants think are important for different actors. For the individual, the most important issue of responsibility among the 12 statements is “Use energy efficiently”. The municipality and local politicians should have most responsibility when it comes to “Distribution of information and education material”. The government, the EU and the UN should have most responsibility for the issue “Reduce consumption and discharges of toxic chemicals”. All actors should have least responsibility for the issue to, “Engage different groups in the society”. The result shows that different actors should be responsible for different issues. The government or the municipality should have responsibility for other things than the individual should have responsibility for. The participants might have interpreted the distribution in coherence with what they felt are possible for them to do. “Use energy efficiently”, is something they have the possibility to do something about, while they think that to “Engage different groups in the society” is more difficult for them to accomplish.

One informant was especially interested in consumer power, but does not give herself, as a consumer, responsibility for either statement number three or number seven, that brings up purchase of goods and services. The reason for that can be that the informant has given the responsibility to municipal and national authorities already, and she feels constrained by the structure and societal system to act environmentally responsible in the first place. The same informant was sorting all cards by *almost no responsibility* on the individual level, even if she, as an individual, shows an active interest in environmental issues. The explanation again can be the perception of a limitation within the society or structure itself, and possibly that her environmental effort is meaningless in general if no one else joins her. The perception of fellowship and hindrances seem to influence her perception of responsibility. She is concerned with the big issues, and feel dejected, especially in regards to the authorities.

One informant thinks that it is necessary to change people’s attitudes before one can bring consumption of goods and services into line with the environment. Some of the informants expressed a certain sense of insecurity during the classifying card section. They believed that all levels, of individuals, of local politicians and of the international authorities have equal responsibility for the environment, which is also

argued to be the goal of the national authorities in their work for a sustainable development.

Those informants, who think they have fairly good possibilities to influence environmental issues in the society, all refer to limitations of their own eco-friendly efforts. The informants claim that they have no time and are not committed enough to use the opportunities to act in the society. These kinds of hindrances are hindrances which they in some way have the chance to change by themselves. This can be interpreted as if the informants place the responsibility on themselves. Those on the other hand, who claim they have limited possibilities to act environmentally friendly in the society, refer mostly to societal hindrances instead. They are not acting environmentally friendly because there are societal or structural limitations to do so, which can be understood as an expression for disclaim of responsibility. It seems like individual disclaiming of responsibility is accepted by the participants' own perception of a given responsibility distribution, where the authorities should be responsible for environmental matters, not the individuals. However, all the informants claim that their acting is restricted by their own effort when it comes to influence the household consumption. No one claim that the society as restricting environmentally friendly consumption within the household.

According to the informants, water quality and discharges are the most crucial environmental problems to measure right now, are. One informant said that there are a lot of important questions to deal with, such as chemical discharges. The informants refer mainly to global problems. The participants focus on global problems, such as global warming, which according to some of them need to be measured right away. This problem is understood as an emergent crisis. Some informants also point out that global warming has been given a lot of attention in the media, and that might be the reason why most people think it is so important. Global warming is also understood as a huge and complicated problem, where not only rich countries should be responsible for the outcomes: "We're contributing too, but poorer countries and their consequences [of their actions] are an even bigger problem" (Informant C). By this statement, not only rich countries are responsible actors, but also poor countries, thus the global society as a whole seems to be responsible for environmental problems. That might explain why the government,

the EU and the UN were given the highest responsibility in the classifying card section. The statement can be explained by the fact that the forthcoming actions of the poor countries might be a future problem for the environment, if these countries are to be developed in the same way as the current rich countries have been developed. That the consequences of the forthcoming actions in poor countries are a much bigger problem than *our contribution*, because of their future prospects to be developed, might be hard to justify. The informant puts blame elsewhere, and tries to disclaim responsibility. Relating to contemporary actions and consequences, the developed countries and the consequences from the inhabitants' actions, are a much bigger problem when referring to the size of the ecological footprint.

Everyone, except from one informant, think that global warming is not caused by individuals' domestic behaviour. The informant who disagreed said: "No, not in the first place. Still to a certain point, but [it is] not the biggest cause" (Informant F). The other informants are not sure because they had not reflected on this and one pointed out that: "Yes, but others [are responsible] as well" (Informant E). Some simply claim that everyone is contributing to global warming all the time because most people drive their car and use heating in their homes. The informant, who does not say that global warming is the most important issue but the problem of discharges, said that individuals' domestic behaviour can have an impact on the problem, but they can contribute positively "by not being spendthrift" (Informant B).

All of the informants express a certain influence from their own behaviour on environmental problems. The one who thinks that chemical discharges are the most important environmental problem said: "I am bringing the rubbish to the dump, so I don't influence that much on ground discharges. Well, possibly through batteries" (Informant D). The informants are indecisive; most of them recognise their own behaviour as contributing to the actual problem of global warming. Some said that: "I have a responsibility, but there are others who have an even bigger responsibility". Three informants recognise their own environmental impacts, without saying there are others who have greater responsibility. These informants focus on their car use in the first place, but also on heating. There are some interesting comments which express a greater responsibility. Concerning if the behaviour contributed to the problem, one informant said: "Yes, it does! Through transport of goods from the

products I'm buying. I've never been flying, and air transport is more polluting than car transport" (Informant C). This shows a conscious attitude to the understanding of the connections and complexity regarding to environmental problems, even if this informant blame those who are using air transport instead of car transport.

The business sector is for some informants perceived as a hindrance, as has been mentioned earlier. When the business sector is a hindrance for action, it seems to be understood as having more responsibility. When the business sector is a central and powerful actor, it seems to get more responsibility. The more important the sector is, the more it is understood as a possible hindrance for individual environmental action. "There're those who have more responsibility to do something about [environmental problems], as for example the companies" (Informant G).

When it comes to individual responsibility, in relation to the possibilities to act environmentally friendly, there is an overall high perception of a satisfying individual environmental effort. The participants think that they, as other environmentally aware people, can do more for the environment, but have at least done what they think is a fair share for them to do, as Moisander (1997) would argue that people are doing. According to the participants, the government, organisations and the municipality, have an even greater responsibility to make an environmentally friendly effort. The environmental acting is then dependent on how much responsibility one has in relation to others. The allocation of responsibility might also be a guidance of who that should act on certain issues in the first place. According to A21 (UNCED 1992) the governments have the responsibility to organise the environmental action through the power of laws and regulations. Organisations have the responsibility to provide information and try to involve and recruit people to the environmental movement. The businesses and industries have the responsibility to follow the governments' laws and regulations and develop improved production units etc. While the citizens responsibility should be to obtain information and live as environmentally friendly as possible under the existing circumstances.

# Grønn Hverdag

## Motives for Joining Grønn Hverdag

The informants from GH seem to consist of two different types of participants: those who are strongly committed and interested in environmental issues and those who belong to families who want to receive tips and lower the household expenses. The committed ones are very busy and some pointed out that they do not always have time to make a genuine effort in addition to their work. The ones with the aim to lower the household expenses might not be able to do that either, but then mostly because a lack of interest.

All the informants claimed the main reasons for registration in the network were to get information and tips how they could contribute for a sustainable development as well as economical reasons. People joined the network out of a genuine interest in learning about healthy way of living and to be informed about environmental issues happening in Oslo. Five of the informants had made contact with GH through some other leisure activity or through their working place. Most of the informants are truly committed to environmental issues, even if some informants were more or less encouraged by their employers to register in the network, while others had found the way to the network themselves because of an individual interest. GH is commissioned to arrange courses and lectures by the Norwegian Gardening Association (Norsk Hageforening) and also by different municipalities. One informant said that GH aims “to do the general work that the municipality and government actually should have done” (Informant N).

GH is arranging courses about composting, environmental team work, environmental labelling systems and environmental rules and issues in general. Some of the informants had attended these courses. One informant was informed about GH through a task in the district Council of Bjerke. Another informant has long experience with GH since she has been working with the project Øko-team (present Liv & Lyst) that GH holds. That project does almost work as an environmental team, as the Miljöteams in Eksjö, trying to get a neighbourhood to cooperate in a joint effort. Øko-team was arranged through her task in the district Council of Bjerke. She



said: “Everything GH is working with is directed towards the household; they offer courses about recycling but mostly on organic recycling” (Informant K).

It would be wrong to claim that an important motive for the participants to join GH was to be part of a physical fellowship. However, some of them express that they would like to have more contact with like-minded people and that GH could offer participation on seminars and meetings among the participants in the network in order to realise that. One informant thinks that GH can be more pressing and she certainly misses a kind of fellowship with others who are thinking in the same way as her. Some informants think GH should arrange gatherings occasionally, just to meet in person. For those participants it is important to feel they are a part of the network, and to know there are others like them. Meetings and seminars would make the participants visible for each other. Two of the informants had very recently registered in GH when they were contacted, and were not sure about GH’s profile yet, and had less experience about the network and the network’s motives. Most of the informants associate GH with distribution of information, such as tips and information on the Internet and as a kind of public consumer information centre. Access to these services was a main reason for their registration in the network. GH’s own magazine is considered as a direct way to get information. The participants’ impression seem to be that GH consists of environmentally aware, committed, idealistic, enthusiastic and good people that the participants want to be associated with.

GH is a network with a green profile, but most of the informants think the network’s presence not has been distinguished in the national environmental context. Two informants claim they knew about GH before they received information about them through some other organisation or the local authorities. Only one informant think the urban district of Bjerke, where all informants live, have been distinguished in an environmental context. That person is working voluntarily with similar issues like GH, in the district Council of Bjerke.

Most of the informants claim they had an environmentally friendly perception before they became participants in the network. Those who were newly registered could not tell if they have changed the behaviour yet. Two informants claim that they have not been influenced at all by the participation while two others claim their perceptions

are unaffected but that their habits might have been changed by received information from GH. Some informants claim they are more conscious about their habits than their perceptions, after joining GH. As a consequence of participating in a seminar, one informant has started recycling organic waste in his garden.

## **Consumption Patterns**

### **Purchase<sup>38</sup>**

Four of the informants said that they purchase environmentally friendly products frequently, and three informants said “yes, sometimes”. Furniture, building material, soil and manure (not fertilizer) treatment products and transport of products are important to think about when buying products. The purchase of these kinds of products is dependent on if they are available in local shops. One informant also pointed out that he only purchases environmentally friendly products “when ecological products are environmentally friendly” (Informant N). This statement points to the potential confusion that exists regarding to eco-friendly products and the labelling systems, which sometimes might be misleading. Eco-friendly products are not necessarily environmentally friendly. When including transport distance etc. for some products, the total negative impact on the environment might be so big that it will be hard to consider the products as environmentally friendly. The products, however, can still be the best ecological/environmentally friendly alternative of today.

Purchase of environmentally friendly products requires knowledge and information for the consumer of where to find them. According to one informant, information is crucial if she will consider purchasing eco-labelled products, and she said: “If I have to search for information about products on my own, I might not [buy them], but I could always be more conscious” (Informant O). Being more environmentally aware is related to knowledge level, which seems to be the responsibility of the individual, according to this informant. Four informants said they consciously try to purchase green-labelled products, and one said he does not. Two informants said it depends on

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<sup>38</sup> National statistics on purchase from Norway is included in Appendix 4.

the supply. One informant pointed out the poor supply of environmentally friendly products in grocery stores.

The products that the informants used to buy are different kinds of cleaning and sanitary products, detergents, dishwashing products, and foods such as milk, fruit and vegetables and ordinary household products. One informant also mentioned building material, another one said ecological manure, two informants said paper products, and one informant mentioned clothes and cosmetics. One participant explained that she purchase these products not only for quality reasons but also in order to be healthier. Ecological products are considered as healthier than ordinary products because of the way they are cultivated. No one mentioned price as restricting the purchase of eco-labelled products. Two people claimed they are annoyed about unnecessary packaging and a poor range of refill products.

The participants in GH seem to buy almost as much eco-products as the participants in Eksjö Miljöteam. It is, however, difficult to measure the amount of eco-products exactly, that they buy compared with national statistics, when the information received from the informants not is complete. The general impression is, as it was in Eksjö, that the participants do try to purchase eco-products only, but it is difficult, because the supply is not so rich. The supply of eco-products might, however, be better in Oslo, because a larger group of eco-consumers exists there.

### **Waste and Recycling Habits**

Each individual household decides the routine on refuse collection outside the house. The households decide if they want the domestic household waste collected each or every other week. Some households get their paper collected, in addition to ordinary waste, if they pay for it. The household gets ordinary waste collected, i.e. all kinds of waste are put in one dustbin. One out of two rubbish incineration facilities or recycling stations in Oslo is in fact situated in Bjerke, and there they offer recycling of almost everything: paper, glass, metal, hazardous waste, electronic waste, furniture, textiles, rigid plastic, organic waste etc. Likewise, the municipality has environmental stations and bigger recycling units placed out at different locations in Bjerke. All of the informants explained they use all facilities available on recycling

in the district area. Two informants have their own composters in the garden and two others deliver the organic waste at the environmental station nearby. Although, all of the informants said they use all recycling facilities offered by the municipality, three informants are neither recycling soft plastic nor organic waste.

Concerning the participants waste and recycling habits it might seem as they could be compared with others living in Oslo and Norway. Because of the close distance to the recycling station, which is situated in Bjerke, the participants might make use of that advantage to a higher degree than people who are living in far distance from recycling stations. The average amount of household waste per person in Oslo in 2003 was 393 kilos and 44 percent of that was recycled (SSB 2004). If waste which goes to energy recycling is included, 85 percent of the total amount of waste is recycled. Oslo does not hold recycling on wet organic waste from households, in contrast to many other municipalities in Norway. The municipality of Oslo accepts, however, garden waste for free (Municipality of Oslo Renovasjonsetaten 2005). The municipality does not have their own dump, but transports the 15 percent of waste which is not recycled or incinerated to a dump in another municipality. In 2002, 17 percent of the total amount of waste in Norway was household waste (SOE 2002).

### **Transport**

Four of the informants have access to public transport, which include bus and underground. Two informants have access to bus only, and one informant have access to bus, underground and tram. Two informants are pensionists and used the measurement of distance to the grocery store. Three informants calculated the distance to work in kilometres, and four informants calculated the distance in minutes. The on average distance in minutes is 19 minutes and the on average distance in kilometres is 4.4 kilometres. Two informants get to work by foot or bicycle, and two informants used to combine car-driving and walking when they get to their place of work. Four informants use a combination of the means of transport, which include public transport.

In the National Travel Survey from 2001 (TØI 2002) it becomes clear that the most common purpose of all journeys made in Norway are journeys made to and from

work, school or study place. Business journeys represent four percent of all journeys. Of all journeys, to and from work, 63 percent are made by car or 70 percent if car passengers are included as well. Eleven percent is walking to and from work and six percent is cycling. The rest, 12 percent, uses public transport to get to work. The best accessible public transport system in Norway is situated in Oslo (including the nearby county, Akershus), where 47 percent of the inhabitants have a very good range of public transport and 26 percent has a good range. Each employee makes 1.04 journeys every day, including weekends, which is related to work. The on average distance to work is almost 14 kilometres long and takes 21 minutes one way. The work trips have increased in distance over the last ten years and the geographical labour market has grown bigger nationally and internationally. It seems like the informants represent the average when it comes to means of transport to and from work. Car is the most common means of transport to and from work, which seems to be the case for the informants as well. The on average distance in minutes does also correspond to the on average national distance to work. The distance in kilometres seems different, however, because the informants use less time to travel a longer distance to get to work, compared with the national average. This can indicate that the informants use less time-consuming means of transport, such as car, to get to work.

### **Environmental Investments<sup>39</sup>**

Spontaneously, some of the informants first said they have not made any environmental investments in their homes. After some consideration, however, they mentioned a few things, albeit some seem less environmentally friendly. Most of the informants live in rental flats. This makes it more difficult and perhaps also uninteresting to make expensive investments. One informant complained about the limitations that exist where he is living and said: “We haven’t made any investments, but we moved in here three years ago and renovated the whole flat and we were thinking environmentally friendly. But there are restrictions in a co-operative flat” (Informant J). In bigger cities, people tend to move more often and are in motion before they settle down, usually in the outskirts of the city. The most frequently

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<sup>39</sup> Supplementary statistics on energy in Norway is included in Appendix 4.

mentioned investments are low energy light bulbs, and A-rated<sup>40</sup> fridges, freezers or washing machines and water saving shower heads. Insulation is also mentioned (windows, roofs, walls) or different kinds of heating systems, such as wood-fueled stoves, district heating system with timer or a room thermostat. Composting for organic recycling is also mentioned. The question of specific investments was raised and most of the informants claim they have purchased some of the things that are on the list. The list consists of:

1) *Different kinds of insulation*: Only two informants have installed extra insulation in the walls and the roofs of their homes. One of these families lives in a self-owned double-detached house, and the other one lives in a self-owned terrace house.

2) *Electric installations, e.g. energy saving lighting, low energy light bulbs and appliances*<sup>41</sup>: Many of the informants have energy saving lighting or low energy light bulbs, but only a couple of them are consistent and try to use it everywhere along with outdoor-lighting. Some informants have energy-saving lighting and low energy light bulbs in their summer homes, but not in the regular residences. There seem to be only a couple of low energy light bulbs in each house. One of the informants argues that she does not use these kinds of light bulbs because: “Regular light bulbs release heat, and there are other things that waste much more energy” (Informant O).

Most of the informants do not know if the household appliances are A-rated or environmentally friendly. Only two informants said they have A-rated household appliances, but one of them also claim he have calculated that one does not save anything when investing in A-rated household appliances calculated on the lifetime of a machine. “That is because of the low electricity prices in Norway” (Informant I).

3) *Effective heating system, room thermostat*: Two households have admission to a district heating system and it is regulated with a timer. Five households have electric heating systems, also with timer or a room thermostat. One household uses a wood-

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<sup>40</sup> See footnote 36.

<sup>41</sup> Most of the informants expressed uncertainty regarding to certification on appliances and bulbs.

fueled stove as a compliment for heating. Two other informants also have an indoor fireplace in the household.

4) *Water saving shower heads and water taps*: Five informants have water saving shower heads, and one informant explained he plans to buy one for their newly-renovated bathroom.

5) *Composting*: Two households have their own composter in the backyard, both for scraps of food and garden waste.

6) *Other things mentioned*: One of the informants lives in a small rental flat which seems to be a temporary residence. She explained that she have not made any investments and said: “If I had a place that I owned, I would invest in healthiness. That’s a dream!” (Informant L). Even if everything inside the flat is hers, she had not made any environmental investments. However, she said the reason, for not investing in the home, is her own decision not to. She said, with a certain sense of guilt: “(...) [I haven’t made] many conscious choices” (Informant L).

According to these figures and the participants’ statements and behaviours, one can say that the participants in GH are making a conscious effort for the environment, to the extent that they do what they are able to do. These areas of consumption are the prioritised areas, which GH is focusing on. The consumption patterns and practices of the participants in GH are discussed in the later chapter entitled Discussion. There are, however, hindrances that limit the participants to do more if they would like to. The next section treats the participants’ perceptions of hindrances. What kind of hindrances do the participants express as delimiting their actions?

### **Hindrances to Action**

The participants’ in GH main motives for joining the network were to get information about environmentally friendly alternatives of living in the household. They were also encouraged to take part in the network for work purposes, where GH could provide information about the environmental situation, which was needed for the informants work situation. The informants expressed different kinds of hindrances when they are trying to act environmentally friendly. The hindrances are

individually different, but there are also some shared perceptions about what might restrict them from acting according to what they feel are the most important environmental issues to deal with.

Four of the informants feel they have limited possibilities to influence the local municipality they are living in. Two informants explained they have a fairly good chance to influence the authorities and only one informant said he have great possibilities to influence the authorities. A frequently repeated dilemma seems to be the view of the individual as being *alone* in the society. Individuals are regarded as powerless in situations where they want to influence environmental matters. Three informants refer to this feeling of powerlessness when they stated they have limited possibilities to act eco-friendly. Another two informants explained they have good opportunities for environmentally adapted acting through work and the network they belong to.

Every one of the informants expressed the feeling of being hindered to act the way they would have liked to. One informant expressed that it is frustrating “not to be heard and that the politicians do something else” (Informant N). She seemed to have no faith in the politicians’ decisions or work. Another informant thought she can act environmentally friendly through the political system and stressed the importance to vote for the political party that one believe has the same opinions as oneself. Some informants said that individual challenges, like laziness, as well as societal hindrances exist because the society is not ideally organised for environmentally friendly action, causing people to give up. According to the informants, politicians should make environmentally friendly living easier. One informant said that things like product and service alternatives, choices and priorities, economic difficulties and poor product supply are all restricting eco-friendly action. One can say that the participants think the societal structure and system to be a challenge which restricts their environmental action. Only one informant clearly expressed that the reason for not using the possibility to act eco-friendly is because of his physical health.

Four informants thought they have great possibilities to influence environmental issues and three informants said they have fairly good possibilities to influence what they believe to be the most important environmental issues in their own homes. The



three informants who explained to have fairly good possibilities for environmental action in their own homes had comments on their expressed choices. The informants were uncertain and defended themselves when they explained why they have made those choices. One informant explained that she has fairly good possibilities for eco-friendly action, but only on certain matters, with no further explanations. Another informant said the possibilities to influence environmental issues are relatively good, referring to the family situation and the decision as to who is in charge of such matters in the family. This informant seemed like he has little impact on environmental issues within the household. A third informant thought she can make environmentally conscious choices in the home if she wants to, but only if she can afford it.

Six informants thought there are different kinds of hindrances preventing them to act environmentally friendly in the home areas, and only one informant said he can not find any challenges for not being able to act. The most common challenge the informants mentioned is private economy. Three informants thought this is a great hindrance. Three informants are renters and not self-owners; they put the blame on the structure and residential limitations in their homes. There are technical restrictions in co-operative flats and in houses with right of tenancy. One informant said that:

Choices like where you choose to live have an impact on the possibilities to do what you want in your home. I could choose to live in the countryside, then [I would] have a lot more choices. (Informant O)

Lack of information from the society is regarded as a hindrance. The societal structure is expressed to be a practical restriction for active pro-environmental behaviour in the homes where they live. Pointing at the system of recycling and organic compost recycling, the municipality efforts are perceived as the main hindrance for recycling. Only one informant thought the reason for not acting environmentally friendly in his home, is his own fault and said: “No [there are no hindrances], but maybe my own commitment, because I’m responsible for my own actions. We’re living in a free country” (Informant I). No one should be forced to make an environmental effort, but choices for alternative living can, however, make pro-environmental living easier.

Six informants thought that voluntary organisations have fairly good possibilities to influence the environmental situation and one informant claimed that organisations have great possibilities to influence the situation. Some informants even thought of themselves as having great responsibility, because of their own involvement in different organisations. The organisations can make their views visible especially for the politicians. Voluntary organisations influence the public opinion with their presence and are strong groups consisting of committed individuals. There are a lot of different suggestions on how the organisations can influence the environmental situation. They can inform the public about shortcomings, do lobby activity, organise action groups, provide general information for consumers, be politically engaged and get sympathy from the public, acting as watchdogs over politicians, getting the media involved in crucial matters and acting with critical voices in the society. One informant said it is difficult for organisations to get sympathy for their cause from businesses and industries, or at least that it have been like that. One informant thought that: “It’s the organisations on the one side and the local government on the other” (Informant L). The organisations and the local government should, according to this statement, cooperate more and not work against each other.

Two informants stated that the businesses and industries have great opportunities to influence the environmental situation; four informants said fairly good possibilities, and one informant was not sure. Many of the informants expressed spontaneous comments on this question. One person said that:

Organisations and the business sector are dependent on each other. It’s like a trend; to invest in environment and to be environmentally aware. (Informant L)

One informant pointed out that to influence the environmental situation should be equally shared among several actors. The businesses and industries can make efforts by practical contribution, like lowering their share of waste or make their activity environmentally friendly. Another participant suggested that on a local level the industries should be responsible for their own effluents. The businesses and industries have the power to change attitudes by setting good examples. One informant stated that different kinds of enterprises are competing with one another, and no one wants to be worse than the competitor. According to the same informant, the business sector also has good possibilities to change the politics. The informant,

who expressed that it is positive with ecological choices for the consumers, thinks that businesses and industries should provide consumers with different choices. The business sector has the choice to do that, and it would be profitable to commit the sector providing more eco-friendly products. One informant thought the sector should take the opportunity to be good examples and be serious about it.

It seems like many of the informants think that lifestyle and the structures surrounding consumption (understood as based on economy and not environment) are leading to essential problems. There seems not to be room for both elements in the contemporary society, with the environment on one hand and the economy on the other hand. The two areas are expressed as not compatible. When the informants discussed the roles of businesses and industries, one informant stated that: “The question is if they want to use that possibility [to influence the environmental situation]. Everything today must be profitable” (Informant J). Another informant said:

They’re not using it [the possibility to influence the environmental situation]. They think about money, not the environment. They’re not willing to use it [the power]. But there are some [businesses] that are conscious their profile. [But] everyone is controlled by the market economy. (Informant K)

### **Responsibility for Consumption Issues and Action**

How much responsibility do different actors have or should have for issues related to consumption? The distribution tells us something about whom the participants think should have the most responsibility for the issues at hand.

The informants place most responsibility for the different environmental issues connected to household consumption more or less directly on the government and the local politicians. The result shows differences between the three levels and between the statements (see the Methodology) on sustainable consumption issues.

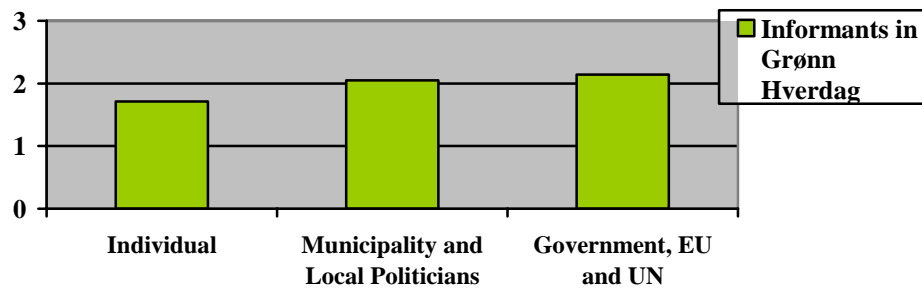


Figure 2. Perceived responsibility; of individual, of municipality and local politicians, and of government and international authorities (EU and UN) in Grønn Hverdag.

The most responsibility is placed on the national and the international authorities. However, the municipality and local politicians get almost as much responsibility as the government and the international authorities. The participants think the individual level should have the least responsibility compared to the other levels. How do the participants distribute the level on responsibility for the individual, for the municipality and local politicians and for the government and international authorities, concerning certain environmental issues?

Table 3. Most and least important issue(s) of responsibility, for the individual, for the municipality and local politicians, and for the government, the EU and the UN according to the participants in Grønn Hverdag.

|  | Individual   | Municipality and Local Politicians                          | Government, EU and UN                    |
|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Most important issue(s) of responsibility</b> | -Use energy efficiently<br>-Environmentally friendly consumption of goods and services<br>-Reduce waste and increase recycling | -Spend money to improve the environment                     | - Spend money to improve the environment |
| <b>Least important issue of responsibility</b>   | -Make environmentally friendly products available in the shops   | -Environmentally friendly consumption of goods and services | -Engage different groups in the society  |

Three issues among the 12 statements are prioritised as important issues of responsibility for the individual (see Table. 3). The issues are: 1) “Use energy efficiently”, 2) “Environmentally friendly consumption of goods and services”, and 3) “Reduce waste and increase recycling”. Both the municipality and local politicians and the government, the EU and the UN should have most responsibility for the issue “Spend money to improve the environment”. The least important issue of responsibility on the individual level is to “Make environmentally friendly products available in the shops”. For the municipality and local politicians the least important issue is “Environmentally friendly consumption of goods and services”. And the least important issue of responsibility on the level of the government, the EU and the UN is to “Engage different groups in the society”. The participants distribute different issues to the different actors. The government, the EU and the UN as well as the municipality and local politicians should be responsible for other issues than what the individual should be. It seems like the participants distribute individual responsibility in coherence of what they think are issues they can or have the possibility to do something about. The issues “Use energy efficiently”, “Environmentally friendly consumption of goods and services”, and “Reduce waste and increase recycling” are all areas which the participants can easily do something about in the household. The national and international authorities should be responsible for the issue “Spend money to improve the environment”.

Some informants thought the sorting section was frustrating, and they said that things are complicated, especially if individuals are expected to act responsibly on their own. There should be more eco-friendly guidelines in the society.

The problems don't stop at the borders. It's obvious that one has a certain responsibility, but... You feel helpless as an individual, and you cannot control others. (...) It's all about priorities; it's like choosing between two evils.  
(Informant K)

There were also some unsatisfied comments during the sorting section, where some informants felt that the municipality should take more responsibility.

The informants have strong opinions about what they think are the most important environmental problems to solve right now. Climate change or effluents of climate gases, the greenhouse effect, effluents from internal-combustion engines, air

pollution and car traffic are mentioned as contemporary and essential environmental problems. These problems can be understood as part of the same problems as CO<sub>2</sub>, air pollution caused by internal-combustion engines, the activities from industries or other sources of pollution. The problems might contribute to increase the greenhouse effect, greater air pollution or climate change in the long-run. Other problems mentioned are waste management, the ozone layer (more important earlier), toxic substances which harm the environment and have an impact on water and water life, resource consumption, and non-environmentally friendly individuals' practices and biodiversity. The problems are divided up by most of the informants by the most important local problem compared to the most important global problem to deal with, as well as the problems in the cities compared with those in the countryside. This shows a certain sense of incorporated A21-thinking, where both local and global problems are seen as equally significant. However, some informants only recognise the problems of local character. One informant thought it is important to make the consumers aware of the consumer power. Another informant thought that individuals do have the possibility to do something about these problems if they want to. One informant thought that in order to solve the air pollution problem from car driving, the government has to measure the problem and set out regulations.

Everyone said that the most important environmental problem is caused by people's domestic behaviour. But some were not sure. Other informants felt that we are all to blame for the problems, there is not only one person responsible for these activities.

It's a complex thing; transport, car-driving, individual choices, individual capacity and governmental willingness to change behaviours. Oslo has many different challenges on the agenda. They prioritise car-driving and the choice is then already made. It's a shared responsibility but much of it depends on the municipality's environmental efforts and priorities. (Informant O)

Another informant argued that the behaviour of individuals is to blame, but the industries and the society are part of the problem too. "The industries produce for the individuals to consume. It's the lifestyle that pollutes" (Informant L). One informant, who has a car of his own, is not sure he is part of the car-driving problem. He said however, that environmental problems are definitely caused by the people's domestic behaviour, and he, like many of his friends, are reacting strongly against it. Informant

M also stated that “it matters what the individual does and if one doesn’t think collectively”.

Every one of the informants believe their own behaviour influence environmental problems, and referred to his or her negative and positive contribution, like why they are or are not very responsible. Some informants admitted their contribution to the problem because they are driving their car, while others believed they are contributing less. There are those who believe they do a great environmental job and try not to pollute as much as others and explained that they (the household) tries to contribute in a good way. Many of the informants seem, however, to put blame elsewhere.

The message of A21, *think global, act local*, was brought up as well. Almost all of the informants said they are thinking accordingly to the motto. But there are some informants who said it can be difficult sometimes. One informant thought that it is limited what he can do now that he is old. Therefore, he believed he has problems to follow up the message of A21. An uncertainty was clearly expressed among the participants as to whether it is a motivating message. Three of the informants believed it is, while one person felt it is not, because it is hard to be motivated to do anything at all in the contemporary society. There were also comments like: “Yes [it is motivating] to see the world as a whole! We share one earth, and we all have a responsibility, and we must all share that responsibility” (Informant L). One person said that it might be motivating, but that the message will not always be put to use in the system, but he still believes in it. Another informant said: “If you think about what it means, it might be [motivating]” (Informant O). There were some interesting comments that confirm the possible problems that the message offers: “It seems a bit far-out. But it might work, except for that about the global” (Informant J). This view does show possible misinterpretations where the message has not served its purpose. This purpose should be to obtain an understanding and develop the work for a sustainable development among all the people in the world. The informants do also have a lot of opinions as to what might be the problem with that kind of message. It seems that this is interpreted as the practical problem of the realisation of what this message stands for. Then, some of the informants pointed at structural and societal problems for introducing a *green* lifestyle. Limitations on the local level, like

dissonance between decisions made by the local government and national decisions as well as demand and profit, are mentioned as probable problems. Limitations on the global level were also brought up, like poor environmental regulations in some countries and cooperation problems between different countries as well.

One informant focused on the multicultural society that we are living in and sees it as a problem: “Yes, you know, it would be hard to get all different groups in the local society to think like that. It’s a cliché! But I still believe it has caught people’s minds to a certain extent” (Informant K). The informants who seemed sceptical and said that it is not a motivating message, also stated that results are essential in order to get people in action, but only if the results are immediate.

Money can be used as an incentive (...) and punishment for not acting [environmentally friendly], like the studded tyre charges which are introduced. I don’t believe in long-time-ahead methods, it doesn’t give results. (Informant N)



## 5. Discussion

In this chapter, the participants' motives, consumption patterns, perceived hindrances for action and the perception of responsibility for environmental matters are discussed. The discussion is based on the importance of the fellowship, which can be physical and/or imagined, and the room for action in social space, wherein the participants act, think, and live. The social space is relevant because through it, the participants' perceptions and actions are shaped. Moreover, the actions depend on the perceptions. The participants' environmentally friendly actions are related to the underlying attempt to make an environmental effort. One of their motives for joining the projects was based on the willingness to make an environmental effort. The following discussion will also focus on the participants' perceptions on the allocation of responsibility, concerning certain environmental issues. The view on responsibility illustrates interesting connections to the participants' perceptions of hindrances and the room for action. Moreover, the individual effort towards the greater good of the environment, in terms of their consumption patterns, can be conditioned by the individual perception of distribution of responsibility.

### The Imagined Environmental Community

The participants' motives for joining the projects were to seek information in order to change their consumption patterns. According to the participants themselves, the information has, to a certain extent, changed their consumption patterns. It is important, both for the participants in Miljöteam and also for some in GH, to be part of the fellowship in order to make an environmental effort possible. For the participants in Miljöteam, this is claimed to be one of the most important motives for joining the team, and might also be one of the most essential motivations for making an eco-friendly effort. Being a part of the fellowship is expressed as superior to the purpose of the team's existence, when some of the informants stated that: "The environmental issues were forced upon us".<sup>42</sup> And "it sometimes felt like coercion" to work with the consumption patterns and try to change them. The social fellowship,

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<sup>42</sup> The quotes in this chapter have been used earlier in the thesis.

in which the participants can make a collective environmental effort, seems to make the effort easier. Being a part of something and knowing about others, who are taking environmentally friendly measures, especially in the local area, trigger them to act. The physically present fellowship in Eksjö makes it possible for people with interest in the environment to get together. A fellowship can, however, take shape in different ways. The participants in GH, on the other hand, do not have physical contact with each other, but nevertheless people feel they are a part of a fellowship. The fellowship is important for some of the participants in GH, but it is even more important for the participants in Miljöteam. Contact with other GH-members is desirable among some of the participants in GH. The participants explained that contact between them can improve the fellowship. At the same time it would give the fellowship substance because then people would meet and make contact with each other. Miljöteam in Eksjö and GH in Oslo may both well be regarded as separate fellowships, but also as a part of a greater environmental community. Returning to the arguments made by the participants; belonging to a fellowship was a significant motive for joining either Miljöteam or GH. The importance of a present physical fellowship is based on the belief that only by being a part of a fellowship, where the goal is shared among many, would individuals' actions make a difference. Because the notion of individuals putting out an environmental effort on their own is widely acknowledged as deficient, the participants regard the fellowship as superior to the individual. "It feels like a tiny drop in the ocean", seem to be the common perception of individual environmental effort. The individual environmental actions would not then be part of a greater plan coordinated in a fellowship. One participant thought that "as a person on my own, I've little influence [on environmental issues]". On the other hand, individuals working together in a fellowship are able to make a considerable effort and may contribute to a positive environmental change; here the individual effort makes sense when it takes place within a greater unit. When individuals get together they are many more to act; collective action is thus more meaningful. Daun (1996) argues that when it comes to power and influence, the collective group is always superior to the individual in all of the Nordic countries. This makes sense when referring to the participants' view of how they are able to influence the environmental situation. The eco-friendly effort becomes valuable in the collective, and is then regarded as being influential. In the case of Miljöteam and GH, the fellowship signifies a membership in a kind of community which has the

potential to influence the environmental situation, and is therefore something positive.

In Miljöteam the fellowship is both physically present and imagined. It is imagined because the participants know and feel they are part of a greater fellowship, which exists on different levels; on local, national and on international. The international environmental community strives to make an environmental effort for the same reasons as the participants and consists of their *invisible* fellow comrades in the environmental movement. It is a relief for the participants to know that they are not alone, but there are others. The participants' eco-friendly efforts seem to depend on whether they are aware of this environmental community or not, because when they know there are others, the effort means something. The participants in GH, on the other hand, are only part of a fellowship with almost no intended physical contact. The fellowship in GH has the same function as the fellowship in Miljöteam. The participants in both projects had the same motives for joining the projects as well as main reasons for action; by being a part of the fellowship one is able to reduce the environmental load and make household consumption more sustainable. The same logic is used by the participants in both Miljöteam and GH. The actions do not need to be performed in a physical fellowship; joint action and effort is possible as part of an imagined community as well.

In this way the imagined community (Anderson (1991) signifies an environmental fellowship or movement consisting of environmentally engaged people who are working in a joint effort towards a common goal. The international environmental community, defined as the fellowship of all environmentally engaged people, communicates through media and speaks an environmental language that is understandable for people who are environmentally aware. The fact that the community may be based on myths is not relevant. Committed people do not necessarily have to act accordingly to their own motives either. It is, however, important that an imagined community exists. From this point of view, it is when the imagined community becomes real for people, that they are motivated to make an effort and to act, as a part of the local fellowship or the greater environmental community. When the imagined community becomes real for the participants, they also believe it exists. However, the only way that the entire international community

can be perceived, is as imagined. The perception of the global environmental fellowship is thus maintained by the imagined environmental community itself.

## Room for Environmental Action

A dominating hindrance for pro-environmental behaviour is how individuals perceive their room for action. Angelöw and Jonsson (1994) discuss the concepts of subjective and objective room for action from an action theory point of view. Hindrances for individual action that are found within the objective room for action are most often hindrances on the structural level. Hindrances on the structural level are lack of environmentally friendly alternatives in the society. On the other hand, subjective room for action aims at what individuals *believe* they are able to. Angelöw and Jonsson claim that individuals can change their perceived room for action. The behaviour is dependent on the choices they make and individuals can make another choice that is more environmentally friendly. However, the choices can be perceived as structurally restricted within the objective room for action, but they are also subjectively chosen. Choices are then dependent on both the objective and the subjective room for action. What do individuals believe their choices for action are? Or; what are their choices? Individuals can, for example expand the objective room for action by joining an environmental organisation. In that way they can increase the possibilities to reverse structural hindrances (1994: 87). The participants in Miljöteam and in GH have chosen to take part in organised environmental action. Aronsson (1990) points out that subjective and objective room for action might coincide, but only to a certain extent. The participants may not be aware of their opportunities in the objective room for action. These opportunities will therefore not be made use of.

The subjective and the objective room for action embody the participants' perceptions of obstacles, and therefore shape the conditions of their efforts towards the greater good of the environment. The consumption patterns are thus dependent on these perceptions. The interplay between subjective and objective room for action can be demonstrated when the participants in Miljöteam and GH claim they have limited possibilities to recycle. This might be because they actually do have limited possibilities to do so. Another reason for the claim can be that they find it difficult to

recycle, because it actually is complicated. Or they have not made an effort to get information about the recycling sorting system where they live, or do not have knowledge about the recycling system in the society because it is difficult to get the right information. “Lack of knowledge makes one unaware of what to do”, as one informant stated. The reason for not recycling can also be lack of trust in the recycling system and that some people think that recycling is of no consequence. Recycling may not serve its purpose, which is to reduce the amount of waste, if waste is mixed at the dump or the recycling system actually does not work.

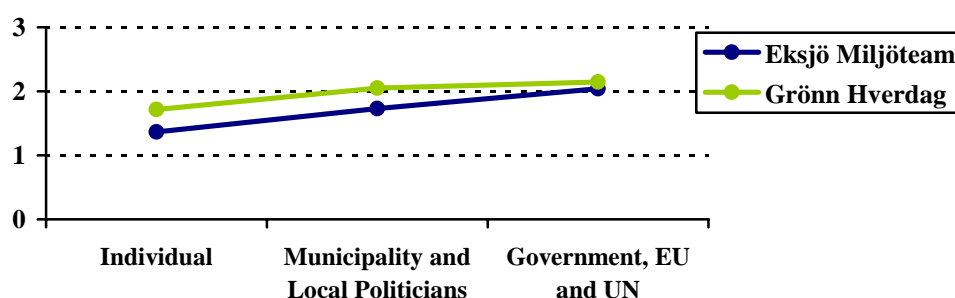
All these arguments are formed in the participants’ social space. Social space is where they live within the society they are a part of. The same can be said of other areas of consumption patterns discussed earlier, like choice of transport to work, which are also formed in social space. Access to public transport is decisive in the choice of means of transport. The access is crucial, and if there is no public transport, people do not have the option. One informant said that “I have an option, but there are not many alternatives to choose from”, pointing at the structural limitations, which can be limitations within the public transport system. If the participants choose the car over public transport, when the access to public transport is relatively good, the decision to drive may depend on many things. The car may be prioritised because of reasons like convenience, family situation, time-saving, or the thought that use of private transport is relatively benign compared to other more environmentally destructive activities. The participants in Miljöteam and GH express a willingness to make an eco-friendly effort based on their conditions and opportunities to do so. When comparing the conditions for environmental effort, access to public transport needs to be highly considered. The participants in GH who live in Oslo, a much bigger city than Eksjö, should have better access and possibilities to use the public transport system than the participants in Eksjö. The possibility for an environmentally friendly lifestyle can then be greater in the city, at least when considering the access to public transport, than in a small town like Eksjö. One informant pointed out that it is crucial where one chooses to live. The choice has an impact on the possibilities to do what one wants in the home. This informant stated that one has a lot more environmental choices, referring to health issues, if one chooses to live in the countryside.

The possibility to live in environmentally friendly ways has decisive effects on what people actually do. Here, it is worth to remind the reader about Halkier's (1997) argument that green consumers' environmentally friendly actions might not be based on individuals' active choice to do so. Halkier argues (1997) that such practice could be part of the daily routine. When sorting waste is mediated via institutionalised practical systems, it can be carried out with little environmental intention. Sorting waste may then be valued by consumers as useful in improving the environment, because of their lack of intentionality on their part. However, individuals may have the intention to act environmentally friendly while at the same time having the conditions to do so, but may still not make use of these possibilities. Individual perception plays an important role for environmental action because reasons to act are not necessarily dependent on the objective room for action. The subjective room for action (individual reasons to act or what individuals think they could do) can be even more significant for environmentally adapted action. When the possibility to influence is restricted because "it doesn't help no matter what you say" it can be hard to believe the environmental action matters. Individual action can also be limited by the perception that individual environmental effort "feels like a tiny drop in the ocean". Subjectively shaped perceptions are often shaped and defined in the same way within one community. The opportunity to make an eco-friendly effort may differ from individual to individual, even if they are neighbours and belong to the same community, because of e.g. their economic and social situation.

## Issues and Actors of Responsibility

How are the participants' perceptions of responsibility for environmental issues which are related to household consumption, in relation to the municipality and the national government and international authorities? The environmentally aware individuals in Miljöteam and GH placed responsibility for environmental issues, either directly or indirectly, on the government (see the Methodology and Figure. 3) or on other important actors in the society. The informants in GH place a higher average of responsibility from the beginning, but the responsibility level does not increase as much with the higher authority level as the informants in Miljöteam thought it should do. Consequently, the informants in GH distribute the

responsibility more equally between the three levels than the informants in Miljöteam do.



*Figure 3. Perceived responsibility; of individual, of municipality and local politicians, and of government and international authorities (EU and UN) among the participants in Eksjö Miljöteam and Grønn Hverdag.*

Even if the differences in Figure 3 are small and the research is not statistically significant, the figure is certainly worth some comments. These figures do not yield extraordinary insights, and with a bigger selection from both groups they could show a completely different image. The informants in Miljöteam think the individual is less responsible for the 12 environmental statements compared the informants in GH. The informants in GH think that the municipality and local politicians should be more responsible for the issues than what the informants in Miljöteam think they should be. When it comes to the responsibility of the government, the EU and the UN, however, all the informants seem to more or less share the view that these actors should have the most responsibility of all three levels of actors. The GH participants seem to feel the individual has more or less equal responsibility to the 12 environmental statements, as the local politicians and the government, the EU and the UN have. One reason for that can be the personal commitment and the personal contact that the informants in GH have with the local politicians and with the local authorities in Oslo. Another explanation can be what has been mentioned earlier, in relation to the research made by Europanel (Angelöw and Jonsson 1994: 88), where Norwegians allocated less responsibility for environmental issues on the government and industry. However, that does not necessarily lead to the fact that individuals should have more responsibility. The GH participants, as the Miljöteam participants, are also very anxious to point out the responsibility of businesses and industries.

One informant said he feels a responsibility for the environmental future, but that there are others who have an even greater responsibility, aiming at other actors in the society. According to A21 (UNCED 1992), the governments and local authorities have the overall responsibility for these kinds of issues. The informants from both projects think that the challenge for the national authorities should be to make all inhabitants environmentally responsible for their actions. According to Lenk (Ariansen 1992), actors with greater authority have greater responsibility; and the more responsibility, the more it is expected of them to act. It seems like individual disclaiming of responsibility is legitimised by the participants' own perception of a given responsibility distribution where the authorities, not the individuals, should be responsible for environmental matters. Responsibility distribution between individuals for a common resource, however, can be demonstrated by the Emån-project in Eksjö. The project is a local management project, where neighbours have a common responsibility for a common resource. According to Hardin (1968) this would not be possible because individuals will only make use of resources for their own profit and would never care for an area meant for the commons. However, it seems like the project has lasted *because* of the participants' own interest for the surroundings, their mutual responsibility for each other and the resource, not self-interest, but for the common good of Emån and the neighbourhood.

One informant stated that important environmental problems are caused by individuals' domestic behaviour, but other actors are responsible as well. Another informant stated that individuals' domestic behaviour is not the main cause to the most important environmental problems. According to one informant, individuals do have the possibility to do something about these problems if they want to. Eden (1993) claims that some behaviour is environmentally *bad* but culturally *necessary*. A lack of choice could be culturally determined and perceived. The ability to influence is culturally determined by agency and structure, and constitutes boundaries within which agency can operate. One informant said that the political priorities decide people's behaviour, and it can be difficult to influence the behaviour because of rules and decisions made by others. This informant pointed out the difficulty to make choices and priorities that must be considered when altering behaviour. He met many challenges and felt that the responsibility needed to be



shared among many actors. According to him, the main actor should be the municipality.

On the whole, the participants agreed that there is a shared responsibility for environmental issues among different actors, depending on authority and the ability to influence the environmental situation. The participants felt that businesses and industries should have greater responsibility compared to individuals; companies have more responsibility to do something about the environmental situation, as one informant stated.

People tend to blame others for environmental problems, which lead to the idea that individuals do not feel any motive or responsibility to act eco-friendly (Angelöw and Jonsson 1994). Regarding the responsibility for global problems, most of the participants seem to put blame elsewhere and claim that the richer countries are contributing too, but that poorer countries and their consequences [of their actions] are an even bigger problem. One informant explained that environmental problems do not stop at the borders. All of us should therefore have a certain responsibility. The informant felt helpless as an individual, and she stated that one cannot control others. The government and international authorities have the most responsibility for different environmental issues. The participants think that environmental problems elsewhere are difficult to connect to the actions made here. Lack of knowledge of global environmental matters and global connections might be the explanation why the participants place a lot of responsibility on the government, the EU and the UN. It might also be because people are told that many of the environmental problems become global, as well as local.

How do the participants distribute the level on responsibility for the individual, for the municipality and local politicians and for the government and international authorities, concerning certain environmental issues? The participants think that different levels of actors should be responsible for different kinds of issues (see the Methodology and Table 4). The government, the EU and the UN, and the municipality and local politicians should all be responsible for similar issues and perhaps more ambitious ones than what the individual should be. The participants in Eksjö Miljöteam and GH distribute responsibility on the individual level for issues

which are in coherence with what they think are issues they can do something about. The issues “Use energy efficiently”, “Environmentally friendly consumption of goods and services”, and “Reduce waste and increase recycling” are all areas that the participants deal with in their everyday life. The participants seem to feel they can do something about these issues in the household. While, “Spend money to improve the environment”, “Reduce consumption and discharges of toxic chemicals” and “Distribution of information and educational material” are all demanding and more complicated tasks for the individual to achieve and implement on their own. Accordingly, the participants think that the individual should not be responsible for these kinds of issues. These issues are all placed on higher authority level.

*Table 4. Most and least important issue(s) of responsibility, for the individual, for the municipality and local politicians, and for the government, the EU and the UN according to the participants in Grønn Hverdag and Eksjö Miljöteam.*

|   | <b>Individual</b>  | <b>Municipality and Local Politicians</b>  | <b>Government, EU and UN</b>   |
|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Most important issue(s) of responsibility</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use energy efficiently</li> <li>-Environmentally friendly consumption of goods and services</li> <li>-Reduce waste and increase recycling</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Spend money to improve the environment</li> <li>-Distribution of information and educational material</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Spend money to improve the environment</li> <li>-Reduce consumption and discharges of toxic chemicals</li> </ul> |
| <b>Least important issue(s) of responsibility</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Make environmentally friendly products available in the shops</li> <li>-Engage different groups in the society</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Environmentally friendly consumption of goods and services</li> <li>-Engage different groups in the society</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Engage different groups in the society</li> </ul>  |

The least important issues of responsibility on the individual level are: “Make environmentally friendly products available in the shops” and “Engage different groups in the society”. The former statement is an issue which the participants think that the businesses and industries should be responsible of, especially when it is not mentioned as an important issue for neither of the two other levels of actors. The

latter statement is mentioned as the least important issue for all three levels. The participants seem to think this issue is the least important of all 12 issues overall. One of the most important issues on the individual level is “Environmentally friendly consumption of goods and services”. This issue is ranged as one of the least important issues of responsibility for the municipality. This shows a clear difference in the distribution of responsibility for environmental issues between different actors. Some issues should be the responsibility of the municipality and some for the individual. Different actors should be responsible for different issues; issues they have the ability, the authority and knowledge of, in order to change and make an impact on.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

The aim of this thesis has been to study the participants' motives for joining the projects and the perceived hindrances for the participants who want to change their consumption patterns. A second goal has been to investigate the perception of responsibility for consumption issues. I have searched for explanations why environmentally conscious individuals have problems to change their consumption patterns. I wanted to find reasons for why it could be difficult to change the consumption practices if one is willing to do it in the first place. The reasons are concentrated around motives, hindrances and responsibility.

Changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production has been on the environmental agenda both nationally and internationally, mainly since the UN first assembled nations to discuss the importance of a global sustainable development in 1992. Environmental, social and economical sustainability were set as prioritised issues for the future. The outcome from the UN's initiative led to the emergence of an environmental policy in Sweden and Norway where a sustainable development became the principal and driving force, both on a national and a local level. Different projects aiming to change consumption patterns in households materialised. People joined these projects and were encouraged to make environmental efforts. In this thesis, I have concentrated on individuals who are defined as environmentally aware because of their participation in environmental projects. The purpose has been to focus on people's willingness to change the consumption practices. In this process they will have possibilities to act in environmentally friendly ways, but they will also run into different kinds of hindrances. I have studied the participants' perceptions of these hindrances.

The participants' motives for joining the environmental projects were to obtain information in order to change their consumption patterns. Their practices have to some extent changed. The participants think that individual effort feels meaningless when the actions are not part of a greater plan coordinated in a fellowship with shared values. One person's actions on their own are perceived as having little influence. It is crucial for the participants to know there are others, who have the

same working aims as themselves. The actions do not need to be performed in a physical fellowship; joint action and effort is possible within an *imagined environmental community*. It is when the imagined community becomes real for people, that they are motivated to make an environmental effort and to act environmentally friendly, as a part of the local fellowship or the greater environmental community.

What determines the participants' environmentally friendly practices and what might restrict their actions? How do the participants perceive their room for action to change their consumption patterns? The participants' behaviour is connected to their room for action. In the room for action they meet different kinds of hindrances for environmental action. Their behaviour depends on the conditions they have in order to act eco-friendly. So, what are their perceptions of the possibilities of them acting eco-friendly? The participants' environmental effort is based on the conditions they have to act eco-friendly, which is limited by both individual and structural hindrances. The participants feel that hindrances belong to the objective room for action, i.e. there are structural limitations for their environmental actions. What people actually do, depend on if there are any environmentally friendly alternatives available. However, even if the conditions exist, people may still not make use of these conditions. Individual perception plays a decisive role for environmental action because reasons to act eco-friendly are not necessarily dependent on the objective room for action. The subjective room for action (individual reasons to act or what individuals think they can do) might be even more important for environmentally friendly action. Subjectively shaped perceptions are often shaped and defined in the same way within one community. The possibility of making an environmentally friendly effort might differ from individual to individual because of their economic and social situation, even if they are neighbours and belong to the same community. Many reasons and opinions decide the level of effort and the hindrances for action.

What are the participants' perceptions of responsibility for environmental issues which are related to household consumption, in relation to the municipality, the national government and international authorities? The environmentally aware individuals in Miljöteam and GH place responsibility for environmental issues which are connected to household consumption, either directly or indirectly, on the

government or on other actors in society in first place. On the whole, the participants claimed there is a shared responsibility for environmental issues among various actors, depending on authority and the possibility to influence the issues. Businesses and industries make up the sector which the participants think should have greater responsibility than other actors.

How do the participants distribute the level of responsibility for the individual, for the municipality and local politicians and for the government and international authorities, concerning certain environmental issues? The participants think that the different levels of actors should be responsible for different kinds of issues. The government, the EU, the UN and the municipality and local politicians should be responsible for similar issues, and perhaps more ambitious ones, than what the individual should be. I would argue that the participants in Eksjö Miljöteam and GH distribute individual responsibility in coherence of what they think are issues they can or have the possibility to do something about.

The thesis tells us that the existence of the fellowship is crucial for environmentally friendly action. There are different perspectives on understanding hindrances for action, because they are perceived differently. Responsibility for environmental issues connected to household consumption are perceived as shared. But the responsibility increases with higher authority level.

There are many ways of explaining environmental effort, or the lack thereof. This approach illustrates one of them. I have learned that the perceptions of individuals taking part in organised environmental action are of crucial importance for people's motivation to act for a sustainable development and change their consumption patterns.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Agenda 21; Chapter 4

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#### CHANGING CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

4.1. This chapter contains the following programme areas:

- (a) Focusing on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption;
- (b) Developing national policies and strategies to encourage changes in unsustainable consumption patterns.

4.2. Since the issue of changing consumption patterns is very broad, it is addressed in several parts of Agenda 21, notably those dealing with energy, transportation and wastes, and in the chapters on economic instruments and the transfer of technology. The present chapter should also be read in conjunction with chapter 5 (Demographic dynamics and sustainability).

#### PROGRAMME AREAS

##### A) Focusing on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption

###### Basis for action

4.3. Poverty and environmental degradation are closely interrelated. While poverty results in certain kinds of environmental stress, the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances.

4.4. Measures to be undertaken at the international level for the protection and enhancement of the environment must take fully into account the current imbalances in the global patterns of consumption and production.

4.5. Special attention should be paid to the demand for natural resources generated by unsustainable consumption and to the efficient use of those resources consistent with the goal of minimizing depletion and reducing pollution. Although consumption patterns are very high in certain parts of the world, the basic consumer needs of a large section of humanity are not being met. This results in excessive demands and unsustainable lifestyles among the richer segments, which place immense stress on the environment. The poorer segments, meanwhile, are unable to meet food, health care, shelter and educational needs. Changing consumption patterns will require a multipronged strategy focusing on demand, meeting the basic needs of the poor, and reducing wastage and the use of finite resources in the production process.

4.6. Growing recognition of the importance of addressing consumption has also not yet been matched by an understanding of its implications. Some economists are questioning traditional concepts of economic growth and underlining the importance of pursuing economic objectives that take account of the full value of natural resource capital. More



needs to be known about the role of consumption in relation to economic growth and population dynamics in order to formulate coherent international and national policies.

## **Objectives**

4.7. Action is needed to meet the following broad objectives:

- (a) To promote patterns of consumption and production that reduce environmental stress and will meet the basic needs of humanity;
- (b) To develop a better understanding of the role of consumption and how to bring about more sustainable consumption patterns.

## **Activities**

### **(A) Management-related activities**

Adopting an international approach to achieving sustainable consumption patterns

4.8. In principle, countries should be guided by the following basic objectives in their efforts to address consumption and lifestyles in the context of environment and development:

- (a) All countries should strive to promote sustainable consumption patterns;
- (b) Developed countries should take the lead in achieving sustainable consumption patterns;  
Developing countries should seek to achieve sustainable consumption patterns in their development process, guaranteeing the provision of basic needs for the poor, while avoiding those unsustainable patterns, particularly in industrialized countries, generally recognized as unduly hazardous to the environment, inefficient and wasteful, in their development processes. This requires enhanced technological and other assistance from industrialized countries.

4.9. In the follow-up of the implementation of Agenda 21 the review of progress made in achieving sustainable consumption patterns should be given high priority.

### **B) Data and information**

#### **Undertaking research on consumption**

4.10. In order to support this broad strategy, Governments, and/or private research and policy institutes, with the assistance of regional and international economic and environmental organizations, should make a concerted effort to:

- (a) Expand or promote databases on production and consumption and develop methodologies for analysing them;
- (b) Assess the relationship between production and consumption, environment, technological adaptation and innovation, economic growth and development, and demographic factors;
- (c) Examine the impact of ongoing changes in the structure of modern industrial economies away from material-intensive economic growth;
- (d) Consider how economies can grow and prosper while reducing the use of energy and materials and the production of harmful materials;
- (e) Identify balanced patterns of consumption worldwide which the Earth can support in the long term.

#### **Developing new concepts of sustainable economic growth and prosperity**

4.11. Consideration should also be given to the present concepts of economic growth and the need for new concepts of wealth and prosperity which allow higher standards of living through changed lifestyles and are less dependent on the Earth's finite resources and more

in harmony with the Earth's carrying capacity. This should be reflected in the evolution of new systems of national accounts and other indicators of sustainable development.

#### C) International cooperation and coordination

4.12. While international review processes exist for examining economic, development and demographic factors, more attention needs to be paid to issues related to consumption and production patterns and sustainable lifestyles and environment.

4.13. In the follow-up of the implementation of Agenda 21, reviewing the role and impact of unsustainable production and consumption patterns and lifestyles and their relation to sustainable development should be given high priority.

#### Financing and cost evaluation

4.14. The Conference secretariat has estimated that implementation of this programme is not likely to require significant new financial resources.

### **B. Developing national policies and strategies to encourage changes in unsustainable consumption patterns**

#### **Basis for action**

4.15. Achieving the goals of environmental quality and sustainable development will require efficiency in production and changes in consumption patterns in order to emphasize optimization of resource use and minimization of waste. In many instances, this will require reorientation of existing production and consumption patterns that have developed in industrial societies and are in turn emulated in much of the world.

4.16. Progress can be made by strengthening positive trends and directions that are emerging, as part of a process aimed at achieving significant changes in the consumption patterns of industries, Governments, households and individuals.

#### **Objectives**

4.17. In the years ahead, Governments, working with appropriate organizations, should strive to meet the following broad objectives:

- (a) To promote efficiency in production processes and reduce wasteful consumption in the process of economic growth, taking into account the development needs of developing countries;
- (b) To develop a domestic policy framework that will encourage a shift to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption;
- (c) To reinforce both values that encourage sustainable production and consumption patterns and policies that encourage the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries.

#### **Activities**

##### A) Encouraging greater efficiency in the use of energy and resources

4.18. Reducing the amount of energy and materials used per unit in the production of goods and services can contribute both to the alleviation of environmental stress and to greater economic and industrial productivity and competitiveness. Governments, in cooperation with industry, should therefore intensify efforts to use energy and resources in an economically efficient and environmentally sound manner by:

- (a) Encouraging the dissemination of existing environmentally sound technologies;
- (b) Promoting research and development in environmentally sound technologies;
- (c) Assisting developing countries to use these technologies efficiently and to develop technologies suited to their particular circumstances;

- (d) Encouraging the environmentally sound use of new and renewable sources of energy;
- (e) Encouraging the environmentally sound and sustainable use of renewable natural resources.

#### B) Minimizing the generation of wastes

4.19. At the same time, society needs to develop effective ways of dealing with the problem of disposing of mounting levels of waste products and materials. Governments, together with industry, households and the public, should make a concerted effort to reduce the generation of wastes and waste products by:

- (a) Encouraging recycling in industrial processes and at the consumed level;
- (b) Reducing wasteful packaging of products;
- (c) Encouraging the introduction of more environmentally sound products.

#### C) Assisting individuals and households to make environmentally sound purchasing decisions

4.20. The recent emergence in many countries of a more environmentally conscious consumer public, combined with increased interest on the part of some industries in providing environmentally sound consumer products, is a significant development that should be encouraged. Governments and international organizations, together with the private sector, should develop criteria and methodologies for the assessment of environmental impacts and resource requirements throughout the full life cycle of products and processes. Results of those assessments should be transformed into clear indicators in order to inform consumers and decision makers.

4.21. Governments, in cooperation with industry and other relevant groups, should encourage expansion of environmental labelling and other environmentally related product information programmes designed to assist consumers to make informed choices.

4.22. They should also encourage the emergence of an informed consumer public and assist individuals and households to make environmentally informed choices by:

- (a) Providing information on the consequences of consumption choices and behaviour so as to encourage demand for environmentally sound products and use of products;
- (b) Making consumers aware of the health and environmental impact of products, through such means as consumer legislation and environmental labelling;
- (c) Encouraging specific consumer-oriented programmes, such as recycling and deposit/refund systems.

#### D) Exercising leadership through government purchasing

4.23. Governments themselves also play a role in consumption, particularly in countries where the public sector plays a large role in the economy and can have a considerable influence on both corporate decisions and public perceptions. They should therefore review the purchasing policies of their agencies and departments so that they may improve, where possible, the environmental content of government procurement policies, without prejudice to international trade principles.

#### E) Moving towards environmentally sound pricing

4.24. Without the stimulus of prices and market signals that make clear to producers and consumers the environmental costs of the consumption of energy, materials and natural resources and the generation of wastes, significant changes in consumption and production patterns seem unlikely to occur in the near future.

4.25. Some progress has begun in the use of appropriate economic instruments to influence consumer behaviour. These instruments include environmental charges and taxes,

deposit/refund systems, etc. This process should be encouraged in the light of country-specific conditions.

F) Reinforcing values that support sustainable consumption

4.26. Governments and private-sector organizations should promote more positive attitudes towards sustainable consumption through education, public awareness programmes and other means, such as positive advertising of products and services that utilize environmentally sound technologies or encourage sustainable production and consumption patterns. In the review of the implementation of Agenda 21, an assessment of the progress achieved in developing these national policies and strategies should be given due consideration.

**Means of implementation**

4.27. This programme is concerned primarily with changes in unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and values that encourage sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles. It requires the combined efforts of Governments, consumers and producers. Particular attention should be paid to the significant role played by women and households as consumers and the potential impacts of their combined purchasing power on the economy.

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## Appendix 2

### The Sample of Informants

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#### The Informants in Eksjö Miljöteam

The informants consist of eight persons from the Eksjö Miljöteam network which had its peak in the 1990s with approx. sixty connected households, which are divided into nine different teams. I wanted to cover different groups from the variables sex, age, social status as well as different individuals from different teams.

Sex; four males, four females

Age: the average age was 44.9 years old within the sample, and the median was 44. The oldest was 69 and the youngest 32 when I conducted the interviews.

Social status;

-two informants are singles

-one informant is married, with grown-up children

-five informants live with children and partner/wife/husband, with an average 2.2 children

Miljöteam: The informants' represented four different teams; three informants from one team, two informants from two of the teams and one informant from the last team. After advice from the administrative leader in Miljöteam I contacted those teams which he said might be interested to give an interview. Then I contacted the responsible team leader in each of those teams, who gave me a list of those persons in her or his team that could be interested in taking part in my research. The contact with each team-member was done by telephone, where almost everyone was interested and able to take part in short notice. Only three persons were not interested and politely declined to participate. The interviews were conducted within one week.

### Occupation:

- three informants are teachers
- four informants worked in the health care sector (private or public)
- one informant is a pensionist with a technical working career as a background.

### Education:

- 9-year compulsory school: 1 informant
- Upper secondary school: 2 informants
- University/College of higher learning: 4 informants
- Vocational school: 1 informant

### Educational direction from higher educational background:

- Social: 4 informants
- Humanistic/educational: 3 informants

Five of the informants are originally from the municipality; three of them have been living somewhere else during their educational period, while the other two informants have never lived outside the municipality. Three informants are originally from another municipality, but from the same province within short distance.

The households, which the informants represent, consist of on average 3.125 persons. Only one informant is living in a rental apartment, while the other informants are living in detached houses in residential districts. The average living area in the household is 116.5 m<sup>2</sup> per household and 37.3 m<sup>2</sup> per person. Every household have and use one car each. Most of the informants registered to a team in the period between 1994 and 2000.

### **The Informants in Grønn Hverdag**

The informants in Bjerke consist of seven individuals who have been registered as participants in Grønn Hverdag within the last four years. Bjerke has access to nature area and different means of public transport, which is considered as important. My wish was to cover different groups from the variables sex, age and social status in the first place.

Sex: three males, four females

Age: the average age is 41.6 years old within the sample, and the median is 43. The oldest is 71 and the youngest 31.

Social status:

-three informants are singles

-one informant is married, with grown-up children

-one informant lives with partner and grown-up children

-two informants live with children and wife/husband, with in average 2.5 children

Grønn Hverdag: The seven informants are registered in the environmental network. The informants were contacted after receiving a list from the administration in the network over GH registered participants in the area. I contacted the informants by first sending them a preparing letter. Then I called them after a couple of days. It was difficult to arrange meetings with some of them, mainly because of time priorities. Grønn Hverdag also operates with lists that are not up-to-date, containing old addresses, no longer registered Oslo-inhabitants or old telephone numbers. Therefore, this work was very time-consuming and in slow progress. I sent 25 letters and was in contact with half of them. Nine took part in an interview, but I use seven of them. These seven interviews were conducted during the same time. Two of the interviews were conducted several months earlier and were only used for training and preparing. The seven interviews were conducted within one month. I asked specifically for participants who had registered in Grønn Hverdag in the period 2000-2004.

### Occupation:

- two informants work in the health care sector (official)
- one informant is director of security
- one informant is a chemist
- one informant is a senior consultant
- two informants are pensionists, one of them with background as gardener and the other as an economic/law consultant.

Three of the informants are politically and voluntarily involved in the official district Council of Bjerke.

### Education:

- University/College of higher learning: 5 informants
- Vocational or Folk high school: 2 informants

### Educational direction from higher educational background:

- Social: 1 informant
- Social Scientific: 1 informant
- Scientific (biology and chemistry): 2 informants
- Technical: 1 informant
- One informant with both social and scientific educational background
- One informant with both economic and legal science educational background

One person is originally from the municipality, but not from Bjerke. Six of the informants are originally from another municipality within far or short distance. Two informants have been living in Oslo for less than three years; the other ones have been living in Oslo for more than ten years. All informants have been living in different places in Oslo.



Most of the informants were registered as participants in Grønn Hverdag in the period between 2000 and 2004. Two informants had only been registered in GH for two months when I contacted them.

The households that the informants represent consist of on average 2.57 persons. One informant is living in a self-owned double-detached house (the household moved out in February 2005), Two of the informants are living in terrace houses (one informant owned it and the other one hired it). Four of the informants live in apartments, where only one of them have a house with right of tenancy and the other informants live in co-operative flats. No one live in detached houses in residential districts. Only three persons with her/his family have access to a private garden. The average living area is 81.29 m<sup>2</sup> per household and 31.6 m<sup>2</sup> per person. Five households have and use one car each and two households do not own a car.

## Appendix 3

### Interview Guide; Informants in Eksjö Miljöteam and GH (in Swedish/Norwegian)

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#### Frågeområde 1

#### Grønn Hverdag/Eksjö Miljöteam och Agenda 21

1. Berätta om dina erfarenheter (det generella intrycket, hur du upplever GH/Miljöteam) av GH/Miljöteam?
2. Vad tror du målet är med det arbetet som de gör/ett sådant projekt, vad vill man uppnå?
3. Har deltagelsen i GH/Miljöteam påverkat hushållets och dina vanor och miljöuppfattningar?  
Ja (1) Nej (2)
4. Om ja, hur? Kan du specificera, vilka attityder som har förändras hos dig?
5. Vad var det som gjorde att du registrerade dig i GH/blev deltagare i Eksjö Miljöteam?
6. Vad skulle du vilja säga att Agenda 21 innebär? (ev. infoupplýsning i tillägg)
7. Tycker du Agenda 21 har utmärkt sig i samhället?  
Ja (1) Nej (2)
8. Varifrån har du fått information om Agenda 21? (flera alternativ)  
Kommunen (1) Arbetet (2) Förening/organisation (3) Media (press, radio, tv) (4) vänner (5) övrigt (6) skriv upp alla.

GH's/Eksjö Miljöteam's initiativ är delvis baserat på arbetet med Agenda 21 mm. Kap. 4 som handlar om konsumtion och livsstil tex. Handlingsplan från 1992.

9. På vilket sätt tycker du GH/Eksjö Miljöteam (Bjerke/Eksjö) har utmärkt sig i miljösammanhang? Menar du att jobbet istället skulle varit gjord av kommunen/staten/organisation/någon annan?

### Övning med sortering:

Ansvar: Vem eller vilka tycker du har ansvar för olika områden som berör hushållskonsumtion (hållbar utveckling och A21-om vet om). Först: ditt eget ansvar (individuellt) (hur mycket ansvar du känner att du har, eller bör ha) och sorterar korten efter:

- Jag själv har nästan inget ansvar
- Jag själv har visst ansvar
- Jag själv har stort ansvar
- Jag själv har hela ansvaret

### Frågeområde 2

#### Miljövanor i vardagen

1. Handlar du/ni miljövänliga varor?

Nej (1) Ibland/det händer (2) Ja, ganska ofta (3) Alltid (4)

2. Skulle du vilja säga att ni medvetet (bevisst) handlar miljömärkta varor?

3. Vilken typ av varor och produkter?

4. Sorterar ni era sopor? (vad är möjligt att sortera i hushållet, vad går inte men i närheten)

Om ja; vilka sopor sorterar du? (Plast, papper/tidningar, glas, metall, organiskt, kemikalier (batterier, medicin mm))

(vilka kollektivtransportalternativ finns tillgängliga)

5. Vid arbete (annan sysselsättning): hur långt har du till arbetet (km)?

6. Hur tar du dig till jobbet (alternativt mataffären, andra vardagsgöromål)

Bil (1) Buss (2) Tåg (3) Cykel, går (4) Spårvagn (5) T-bana (6) Kombination (7)

7. Om ni har bil, i vilka sammanhang används den?

Arbete (1) Inköpstillfällen (2) Besök (3) Helgresor (4) Semester (5) Övrigt (6)  
(3,4,5 nöjesåkning)

8. Hur många gånger i veckan använder du/ni bilen till de olika tillfällena?

9. Uppskattningsvis, hur långt kör ni med bilen per vecka (år)?

10. Har du använt dig av flygtransport under det senaste året?

Ja (1) Nej (2)

11. Om ja, vilket/vilka sammanhang?

12. Har ni gjort några speciella miljöinvesteringar i hemmet?

Isolering generellt

Isolering av fönster

Elektrisk installering som t.ex. energispar lampor/glödlampor (ute)

Elektriska vitvaror (a-klass, e-nøk)

Effektivt uppvärmningssystem, termostat, värmepump, fjärrvärme

Spardusch/kran

Kompost (kall/varm)

Annat

13. Genom vem eller vad tror du att du påverkas av när du ska göra dina inköp (både ökande, minskande och kvalitet)?(bevisst/ubevisst) Gör (fråga en o en):

Media & reklam (tv, radio, tidningar) att du köper mer eller mindre eller annorlunda

(1) Rea & Kampanjer att du köper mer, mindre eller annorlunda (2)

Miljöorganisationer (arbetsplats, skola m.m.) – ii - (3) Din omgivning, familj och vänner –ii- (4) Övrig information och tips –ii- (5) Annat (6)

Övning med sortering:

Ansvar: Hur mycket ansvar tycker du att kommunens politiker har för olika områden som berör hushållskonsumtion (hållbar utveckling och A21-om vet om). Sortering av korten efter hur stort ansvar du tycker kommunen och kommunens politiker har eller borde ha:

- kommunen och kommunens politiker har nästan inget ansvar
- kommunen och kommunens politiker har visst ansvar
- kommunen och kommunens politiker har stort ansvar
- kommunen och kommunens politiker har hela ansvaret

### Frågeområde 3

#### Fritid & natur

1. Vad gör du helst på din fritid (olika aktiviteter)?
2. Är du medlem i någon organisation eller förening? I så fall vilken/vilka?  
Nej (1) Politisk organisation (2) Kulturförening (3) Idrottsförening (4) Naturförening  
(5) Hjälporganisation/humanitär (6) Religiös församling (7) Annat (8)
3. Brukar du ofta vara ute i naturen (utanför tätbebyggelsen)?  
Ja, en eller flera gånger om dagen (1) 3-6 gånger i veckan (2) 1-2 ggr i veckan (3) Ett par gånger i månaden (4) Mer sällan (5)
4. Var är du helst i naturen? (I närheten av hav, skog, fjäll t.ex.)
5. Vad gör du helst i naturen? (idrottar, fiskar, vandrar m.m.)
6. Vad tänker du på när du hör ordet natur?  
(Vad känner du då?)
7. Vad tänker du på när du hör ordet miljö?

#### Övning med sortering:

Vilket ansvar har statliga styringsorgan så som regeringen och internationella organ som EU och FN m.fl.?: Vilket ansvar du tycker att regeringen, EU och FN (internationella myndigheter) har eller borde ha för hushållskonsumtion (hållbar utveckling, och Agenda 21-om vet om).

- Regeringen, EU och FN m.fl. har nästan inget ansvar
- Regeringen, EU och FN m.fl. har visst ansvar
- Regeringen, EU och FN m.fl. har stort ansvar
- Regeringen, EU och FN m.fl. har hela ansvaret

### Frågeområde 4

#### Ansvar & engagemang (övning)

1. Hur stora möjligheter har du själv att i samhället påverka de miljöfrågor som du tycker är viktiga?  
Inte alls (1) liten möjlighet (2) ganska stor möjlighet (3) Stor möjlighet (4)

2. Vad är det som kan vara ett hinder för dig att i samhället påverka det du tycker är viktigt?

Ja (1) Nej (2)                      Lista

3. Hur stora möjligheter har du själv att i ditt hem påverka de miljöfrågor som du tycker är viktiga?

Inte alls (1) liten möjlighet (2) ganska stor möjlighet (3) Stor möjlighet (4)

4. Vad är det som kan vara ett hinder för dig att i ditt hem påverka det du tycker är viktigt?

Ja (1) Nej (2)                      Lista

5. Hur stor möjlighet har frivilliga organisationer att påverka miljösituationen?

Inte alls (1) liten möjlighet (2) ganska stor möjlighet (3) Stor möjlighet (4)

6. I så fall hur?

7. Hur stor möjlighet har det privata näringslivet att påverka miljösituationen?

Inte alls (1) liten möjlighet (2) ganska stor möjlighet (3) Stor möjlighet (4)

8. I så fall hur?

9. Vad är ett gräsrotsperspektiv för dig? Att förändring sker nerifrån (folket) (underifrån-perspektiv, bottom-up)?

10. Hur blir du (eller vad gör dig/skulle göra dig) engagerad i olika miljöproblem?  
Genom:

Dåliga nyheter/upprörd (1) Bra nyheter/motiverad (2) reklam (3) information (4)  
forskning (5) min omgivning (6) annat (7)

11. Vilken anser du är det viktigaste miljöproblemet det är mest bråttom att åtgärda just nu? (öppen)

12. Ev, luft-, och vattenföroreningar eller liknande: menar du att dessa miljöproblem har orsakats av den vanliga människans beteende?

Menar du att du och ditt beteende (dina vanor), (som t.ex. att du kör bil, tar flyget, håller ut något i avloppet, toaletten eller diskhon), skulle kunna bidra till en förbättring av detta miljöproblem? Har det någon inverkan på dessa miljöproblem? (öppen)

13. A21 jobbar för tankesättet ”tänk globalt, handla lokalt”, menar du att du tänker så? Tycker du att det är ett motiverande budskap? Vad är problemet?

Kommentarer, något speciellt du vill ta upp eller påpeka:

Ge över enkätfrågorna och fråga efteråt om det är något de vill kommentera på frågorna i undersökningen.

### Frågeområde 5

Enkätundersökning/Spørreundersøkelse (norsk versjon)

1. Mennesket har rett til å tilpasse naturen etter sitt behov

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

2. Til tross for menneskets spesielle evner så er vi likevel underlagt naturens lover

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

3. Om vi fortsetter som i dag kommer vi snart til å oppleve en større økologisk katastrofe

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

4. Jordens naturressurser er uuttømmelige, det gjelder bare å lære oss hvordan vi skal ta ut dem

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

5. Naturens komplekse sammensetning fungerer som et sikkerhetsnett mot *alt* som kan true den

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

6. Menneskets inngrep i naturen fører ofte til katastrofale følger

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

7. Planter og dyr har akkurat like stor rett til å eksistere som mennesker

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

8. Den såkalte ”økologiske krisen” som vi hører om er veldig overdreven

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker



9. Vi nærmer oss den befolkningsmengden som jorden har mulighet til å brødfø

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

10. Menneskets oppfinnsomhet kommer føre til at vi *ikke* gjør jorden til en ubeboelig planet

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

11. Prosessene i naturens økosystem avbrytes og forandres stadig på grunn av menneskenes handlinger.

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

12. Vi mennesker bruker vold mot naturen

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

13. Balansen i naturen er sterk nok til å takle industrilandenenes påvirkning

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

14. Jorden kan sammenlignes med et romskip med begrenset plass og begrensede ressurser

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

15. Mennesket er ment å styre over resten av naturen

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

16. Naturens balanse er veldig ømtålig og kan lett forstyrres

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

17. Naturens kompleksitet beskytter mot varige og ødeleggende forandringer og tilpasser seg i stedet etter dem

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

18. Mennesket kommer trolig til å lære seg tilstrekkelig mye om hvordan naturen fungerer, slik at vi etter hvert kan kontrollere den

Stemmer ikke i det hele tatt

Stemmer delvis

Stemmer helt

Usikker

## Appendix 4

### Consumption Patterns in Norway and Sweden

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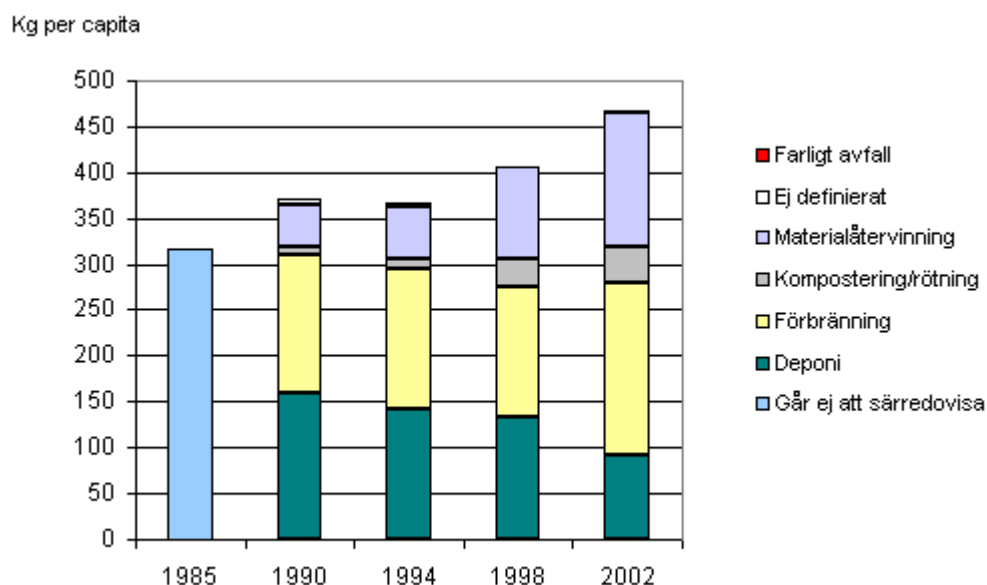
#### Purchase

The ecological activity in regards to agricultural cultivation in Norway, farms with ecological production and the number of ecological products available at the market, is increasing (The Food Portal 2005). In 2004 the agricultural area for ecological production represented 3.3 percent of the total agricultural area. The number of authorised eco-labelled products on the marked increased from 2,400 in 2003 to 2,642 in 2004, an increase by ten percent in one year. The goal of the Norwegian Parliament is that ten percent of the total agricultural area will be redirected to ecological agricultural production before 2010. The figures do not consider the total share of ecological production, or the share of accessible ecological or eco-labelled products in relation to the total production of all products in the market. Moreover, the actual consumption in relation to the total private consumption in Norway is not measured and the figures only refer to production.

#### Waste and Recycling

The total amount of household waste in Sweden is increasing. However, at the same time, the amount of waste which goes to the dump is decreasing while material recycling and incineration are increasing (SCB 2004a).

## Household's waste in Sweden



Source: (SCB 2004a), RVF årsrapport

## Energy Issues

The energy supply in Sweden has increased by 33 percent between 1970 and 2002 (SCB 2004b). The energy use has increased marginally, then mostly within the transport and industry sector. Renewable energy represented 27 percent of the energy supply in 2002. Electricity for heating of households represented more than three fourths of the share in 2002. In 2003 the total production of electricity in Sweden was 132,535 GWh and the households used 35,743 GWh of them (SCB 2005).

The total national energy use in Norway has increased by 11.5 percent between 1990 and 2003 (SSB 2003). Electricity is the most important energy source in the households and represents 79 percent of the households' total energy use. Wood, as an energy source in the households, represents 15 percent and oil five percent. There are great differences in the household energy use regarding to where you live, and what kind of dwelling you live in. Households in Oslo use less energy compared with households in the rest of the country, probably because of the large number of small dwellings in the capital area. The households' share of the total electricity use in 2001 was 31 percent, where the total production of electricity in 2003-2004 (during a 12 months period) was 111,658 GWh. In 2003 there was 2,144 GWh of district

heating which was ready to be distributed to consumers. The households used 346.1 GWh of them. Fifty-four percent of the total energy use in Norway in 2001 was used for heating, and the households used 17 percent of them. Norway gets a huge share of its energy source from renewable energy, because of the efforts put in hydro power as the main energy source.

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